

American HUNTER

April 2021

NRA Official Journal of the National Rifle Association

KNOW-HOW

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TURKEY CHOW MEIN

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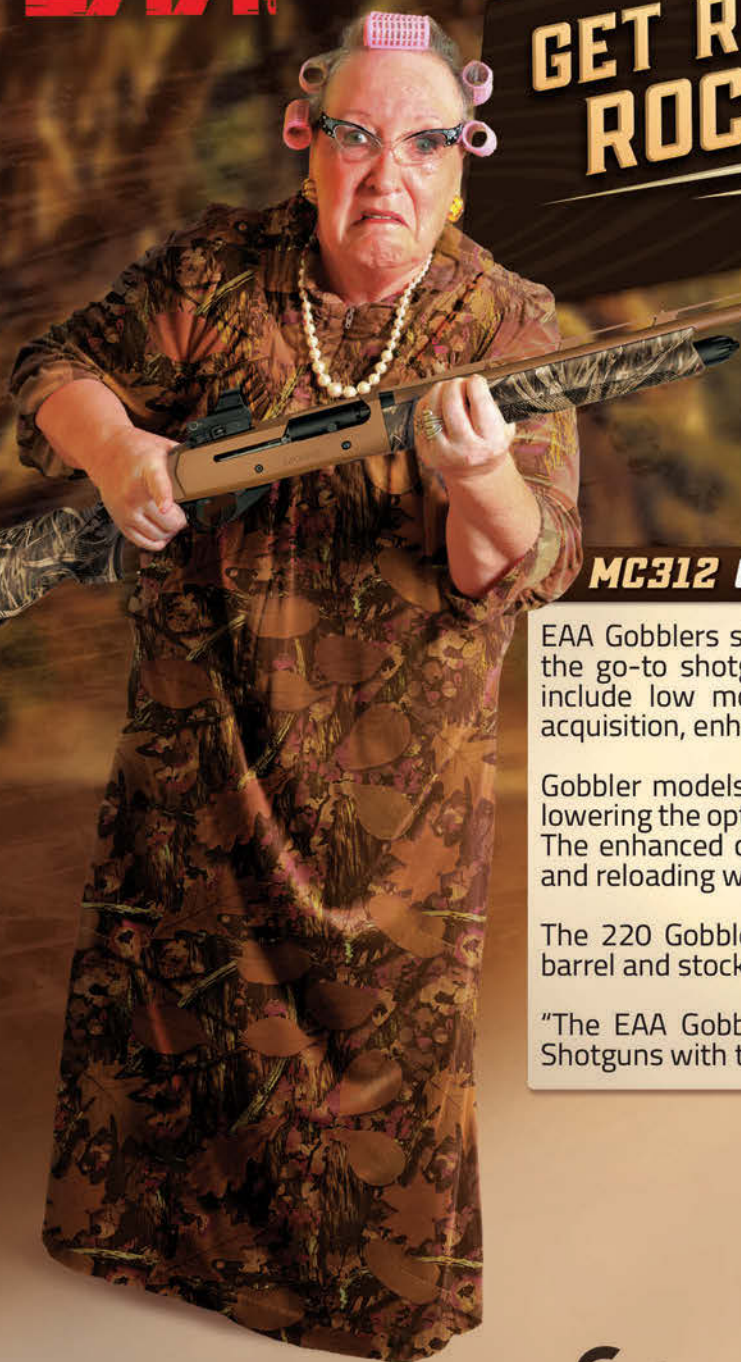
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COVER STORY

GREAT PLAINS GOBBLERS

The Sandhills of Nebraska cover about a quarter of the state. As the largest and most intricate wetlands system in the United States, they hold a large variety of plant and animal life including an abundance of wild turkeys that come in many varieties from Easterns to Merriam's and everything in between.

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

32



SIDEBARS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

Often the best part of a hunting trip is what happens in between the hunting—the tastes of local flavor that may be savored for years. Side trips in the Mississippi Delta serve heaping helpings of presidential hunting history, literature and the blues.

BY BRYCE M. TOWSLEY

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'HURRICANE IDAHO'

The weather forecast for day five of a mountain mule deer hunt in Idaho's backcountry promised "wet and windy," but by the end of the day conditions were much worse than that. The mountains became downright dangerous.

BY DAVID HERMAN

44

SPECIAL REPORT

BIDEN'S BLATANT ATTACK WOULD END THE U.S. FIREARM INDUSTRY AS WE KNOW IT

Joe Biden has not been shy about his plans to abolish the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. His campaign website put it at the top of a very long list of anti-gun measures he hopes to enact as president.

BY JASON QUIMET

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The NRA, the foremost guardian of the traditional American right to "Keep and Bear Arms," believes every law-abiding citizen is entitled to the ownership and legal use of firearms, and that every reputable gun owner should be a member of the NRA.

Wayne R. LaPierre, Executive Vice President

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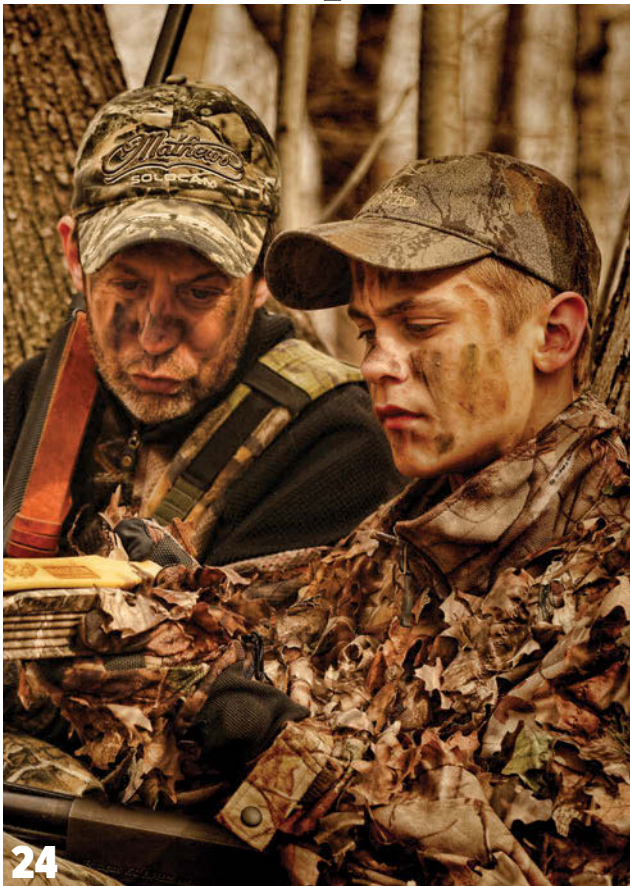
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FIRST LIGHT

HUNTER SAFETY THANKS TO OUR NRA

24 In 1949, New York asked the National Rifle Association for help to improve hunter safety afield. The four-hour course that followed was a “pioneer effort” that has saved lives ever since. Today, no one can imagine American hunting without hunter education as a prudent rite of passage.

BY J. SCOTT OLMSTED

JOIN THE HUNT

4 ASPIRING HUNTERS: WHICH ONE IS JOINING YOU?

26 Every aspiring hunter dreams of a perfect first experience, and every mentor longs to create it. But before the perfect scenario can be created, a mentor needs to understand just exactly what kind of temperament his charge may possess. Here’s a look at four types of hunters: Is one of them your pupil?

BY DAVID HERMAN

KNOW-HOW

ANALYSIS OF THE TURKEY SEASON

28 Turkey hunters must analyze the ever-changing circumstances of the spring breeding season lest they fail to recognize changing behavior among wild turkeys and strike out. Use these strategies to tackle four typical spring turkey behaviors to bag a turkey dinner.

BY MARK KAYSER

RECIPE: WILD TURKEY CHOW MEIN

30 Thinly sliced breast marinated in Asian flavors then sautéed in a hot pan is about the easiest preparation of wild turkey. Add your favorite vegetables and some chow mein noodles and you’ve got a moist, flavorful, healthful meal.

BY BRAD FENSON



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that brings out the Bottomland in all of us!!!
— J. Hoos
3-16-19



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Recruit!

Hello, Mr. Olmsted. Your regular pleas to bring new hunters into the ranks inspired me to take action last season. For many years my limited hunting time was spent with my son, or going solo. So it was easy to rationalize that I didn't have time to devote to anyone else. But my hunting buddy went off to college last August leaving me to hunt alone or get on the R3 bandwagon.

I recruited a young deer hunter into the waterfowl ranks. He purchased his first federal and state duck stamps and we made a couple of inspiring canoe trips where he missed his first birds. Two other friends in their 50s who had never hunted before came out deer hunting with me on separate occasions. During one trip I got a doe so one of them got to experience the full cycle of the hunt (and haul the deer cart out of the woods for me). Both men subsequently purchased crossbows, one got his FID card, and both plan to get certified and hunt next fall. And a fourth prospect, a "reactivate" project, I'm still working on ...

I felt like I made a contribution to the future of hunting. But the best thing about all of this effort is that ... it just felt really good to do it.

Peter Soares, Hillsborough, N.J.

HUNTING GREAT LITERATURE

The February 2021 article "Hunting for Great Literature" ("Join the Hunt") hit home. Bryce Towsley, I enjoy reading most of what you write, and have for many years—down to earth, and for the common person. This selection was everything I've known about reading—and I can relate to every word. I've read all of those, except for Townsend Whelen's story, and I will search for that. Recently I was able to acquire a first edition of Theodore Roosevelt's *African Game Trails*. I so much agree about *Death in the Long Grass*, great story. I've been able to visit Africa once and was planning on going again last year ... so, postponed to '22, I hope. Thanks for doing what you do—and keep up the great writing.

Mike Ray, Washington State, via email

KEEP THE RECIPES COMING

I was excited to see the article in the February issue "Instant Pot Made Easy" ("Know-How"). I received one for Christmas and am already a huge fan of it. I spotted a small error on p. 33 of the article, however. You said that when the cooking time ends and the pot enters "Keep Warm" mode, it displays a countdown. This is incorrect. It counts down the selected cooking time, but counts up in "Keep Warm." Some recipes call for letting the pressure reduce naturally for a specific number of minutes before releasing. The "Keep Warm" count-up keeps track of how long it has been since the cook time completed so this can be done easily. I always enjoy seeing recipes in the magazine, so please keep them coming!

Mary Erickson, River Ridge, La.

REGARDING NO. 7 ...

Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Kayser, I appreciate you including my feedback and addressing the concerns with the article by Mr. Kayser called "Top 10 Reasons to Become a Hunter" ("Join the Hunt," December 2020). I understand what Mr. Kayser was trying to say (No. 7, "Help the Climate"), although it seems you agree that different wording may have conveyed the idea more accurately. It is refreshing to see rational response and courteous discourse from fellow outdoorsmen. I look forward to reading more from Mr. Kayser.

Steven Ready, Pender, Neb.

Mr. Olmsted, I felt compelled to commend you for your response to the issue "No. 7 Stinks." First, you took responsibility for overlooking the political ramifications of cow farts and apologized. Secondly, you stepped in the direct fire aimed at someone else, as an adult (not a cancel-culture child) would do. Thank you. You have my respect and admiration.

David W. Hardy, Bayfield, Colo.

The editors welcome your letters. Mail them to:

Says You, American Hunter, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400.

Or email us at americanhunter@nrahq.org. Letters may be edited for the sake of brevity.

J. Scott Olmsted

Editor in Chief



I learned long ago that I enjoyed telling stories—it occurred to me whenever I traveled home on leave from the Marine Corps. After months or a year or more out of contact, friends would ask me, "What have you been doing?" As a Marine infantryman, I had much to share. Years later, in journalism school, I learned it's not necessarily true to say all good writers are born. Good writing and storytelling can indeed be taught. It's a craft some are better at than others, but it may be taught and therefore learned, surely.

I am reminded of this as we begin to look two issues ahead, and to publication of "Members' Best" in June, a feature story that has run annually for many years. It never fails to entertain AH staff, and I hope the same may be said for readers.

If you, too, enjoy storytelling, especially as it concerns your trials and exploits in the field, please consider contributing to another regular column in *American Hunter*, "Member's Hunt."

It has run continuously on the back page of the magazine for more years than I can count—and why not? It's a fine way for us all to live vicariously through fellow hunters. Perhaps best of all, publication of "Member's Hunt" gives every member a chance to try on the shoes of a professional scribe.

I wouldn't have it any other way. If you agree this popular column should continue to thrive on the back page of your hunting magazine, please send us your stories. We'll read every one of 'em, promise, even if there is not room to publish them all.

NRA HUNTER'S CODE OF ETHICS **1.** I will consider myself an invited guest of the landowner, seeking his permission, and so conducting myself that I may be welcome in the future. **2.** I will obey the rules of safe gun handling, and will courteously but firmly insist that others who hunt with me do the same. **3.** I will obey all game laws and regulations and will insist that my companions do likewise. **4.** I will do my best to acquire those marksmanship skills which ensure clean, sportsmanlike kills. **5.** I will support conservation efforts which can ensure good hunting for future generations of Americans. **6.** I will pass along to younger hunters the attitudes and skills essential to a true outdoor sportsman.

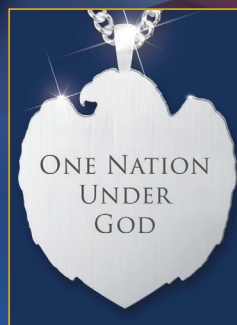
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On the night of Jan. 23, a father and mother inside their home heard their daughter screaming outside. The parents ran out and found a horrific scene. Their daughter was being attacked by her 26-year-old boyfriend, and was bleeding from her mouth and face. The parents tried to break up the fight, but were unable to make the man stop hitting their daughter. The father drew his gun and fired one shot, which went into the ground next to the attacker. At this time, the assailant turned his attention to his girlfriend's mother and attacked her. The father shot him, ending the attack. The boyfriend was transported to Halifax Health Medical Center and listed in critical condition. Deputies said that the father was protecting himself and his family, and no charges had been filed against him. (clickorlando.com and dailycaller.com, Daytona Beach, Fla., 1/23/21)

A calm Sunday morning walk for one Seattle, Wash., man turned into a life threatening situation on Jan. 31. The man said he noticed another man cross the street and come toward him. Out of nowhere, the assailant reportedly started punching the man in the head and chest. The victim was able to draw his concealed firearm and defend himself, shooting the aggressor. Police found the suspect a few blocks away and transported him to a nearby hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. He was to be booked into the King County jail system once released from the hospital. (concealednation.org, and kIRO7.com, Seattle, Wash., 1/31/21)

In the early morning hours of Feb. 2, a man woke to the sound of someone breaking into his home. He was able to get to his firearm and defend himself, exchanging fire with the intruders, causing them to flee in their vehicle. The victim called 911 to report the crime. Responding officers noticed a vehicle with "distinct damage" fleeing the scene. Thirty minutes later, police responded to a single-vehicle accident where they found one man in the backseat suffering from a gunshot wound to the chest. He was transported to a nearby hospital where he later died. The other two suspects fled the crash scene and were still at large. (concealednation.org, and cleveland.com, Cleveland, OH, 2/2/21)

The Macomb County Sheriff's office responded to a report of an active home invasion on Monday, Jan. 25. The caller was the ex-girlfriend of a suspect who had forced his way into her home. Several gun shots can be heard on the emergency distress call. Upon arrival, the officers found the body of the suspect at the top of the stairway leading up to the second floor of the condo. The female caller and a 27-year-old male who is a legal gun owner were both questioned and then released from custody. (concealednation.org, and clickondetroit.com, Harrison Township, Mich., 1/26/21)

A California couple out enjoying a stroll with their two small children and two small dogs on the El Dorado bike trail noticed a mountain lion creeping behind them on the trail for about 10 minutes. The family tried scaring the animal by yelling at it, but the lion kept following them. At this point, the parents called 911 for help. Upon arrival, the sheriff's deputy observed the animal pacing back forth on the trail. When the deputy yelled at the animal and fired a warning shot toward it, the lion charged instead of retreating, forcing him to shoot his service-issued Colt AR-15-style rifle chambered in .223 Rem., killing the animal before it pounced. (abc10.com, and kcrb.com, Placerville, Calif., 1/11/21)

Around midnight on Friday, Jan. 8, a Miami, Okla. homeowner in his living room heard someone banging on his back door. The homeowner was able to arm himself with his shotgun as he heard the intruder go through a window in a back bedroom. When the two men came face to face, the intruder charged at the homeowner, forcing him to defend himself. He fired his shotgun once, striking the intruder. The assailant was taken to Miami Integris Hospital where he was pronounced dead. According to online court records, at least 12 warrants had been issued for the suspect prior to this incident. (tulsaworld.com, Miami, Okla., 1/8/21)

An employee of a smoke shop in Barstow, Calif., shot and killed a robber. The suspect entered the store, pointed a handgun at the employee and demanded money and property. While he was distracted robbing the store, the employee was able to retrieve his own handgun and shoot the armed robber. When officers arrived at the scene, they found the suspect unresponsive, and provided CPR until the paramedics arrived; however, the suspect was pronounced dead at the scene. (vvdailypress.com, Barstow, Calif., 1/6/21) **dh**

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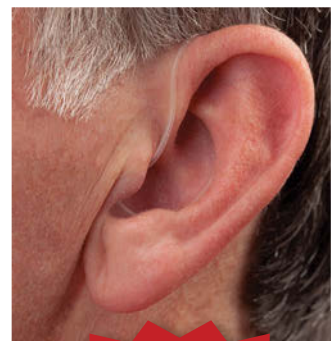
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By Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President

NRA Fights For Truth And Justice

You know it as well as I do—politicians let you down. Principles never do. And it's by fighting on principle that the National Rifle Association is the oldest and most successful civil rights organization in the history of mankind. In fact, throughout our history, our fight for civil rights has seen us not only defending the Second Amendment, but also the First Amendment.

Eighteen years ago, when freedom-hating politicians in Washington tried to muzzle political speech by making it a crime to mention the name of any candidate for office 60 days before an election, it was the NRA, the American Civil Liberties Union and others who fought back to defend the First Amendment.

And today, as New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and his attorney general Letitia James continue to weaponize government power to silence and destroy your voice, my voice and the voices of all NRA members, we're fighting back again with the help of the ACLU and others. Not only to defend our right to free speech, but also the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

Cuomo and James think that if they can kill the NRA, they can extinguish the torch of freedom that NRA members have kept burning bright for 150 years. What they don't understand is that NRA isn't just a concrete building outside of D.C. The NRA, our values, passions and principles beat strongly in the hearts of tens of millions of Americans across this nation. Cuomo and James can no more kill the NRA than they can stop the sun from rising in the east!

But now more than ever, you, me and every NRA member need to recruit as many of our fellow, patriotic Americans to join us as we possibly can. It's our strength in numbers and member commitment that will ensure our next 150 years will be as successful as our first!

You've probably heard me say this before: When you fight for freedom, you get more of it.

And NRA members fighting together over the past four decades have achieved a historic restoration of freedom that all Americans can be thankful for. The truth is, after everything's said and done, you and I win because we fight for truth and justice.

There are about 25,000 violent crimes a week in the United States. The 911 calls are chilling. The statistics are numbing. The innocent are being preyed upon. Everyone knows it. Who is more responsible for protecting our lives and the lives of our loved ones than we are? Why should we give up our right to survive? We all deserve a say in our own destiny!

However, by refusing to arrest, prosecute and incarcerate violent criminals, politicians abdicate their responsibility to protect anyone.

So we're not going to apologize for defending our most basic freedom, because

far too often in a dangerous world, the Second Amendment is all we have. The fact is, at the scene of any crime, it's most often just the criminal and the victim. Despite the best intentions of our police officers, when seconds matter, they're minutes away. And if a growing number of anti-gun politicians get their way, the police won't be there at all.

We know that all of human society is best served when good people can arm themselves. At the very root of our American consciousness is the truth that I have a right to defend myself!

Even gun-ban elitists live that truth! They have armed protection. They lean on political connections to game the system and get their carry permits. If you're a celebrity, a billionaire, a .300 hitter with the Mets, a Wall Street executive or a friend of the mayor—all of them get the permits they want. They all believe strongly in their Second Amendment rights. They just don't believe in yours.

In fact, the history of the gun-control movement has always been rooted in elitism, racism, terror and oppression of the worst kind. The very first gun-control laws put in force after the Civil War were designed for the singular and specific purpose of denying African Americans their Second Amendment rights. Why?

Because racist politicians and their allies in the Ku Klux Klan wanted to oppress, terrorize and murder African Americans at will and without resistance. It was the NRA—from our founding—that fought for and helped secure the Second Amendment rights of African Americans and all Americans.

The fact is, before the color barrier was broken in professional sports, before it was broken in schools, lunch lines, water fountains, in the media or in Hollywood, the National Rifle Association of America was already welcoming all Americans—we've fought for civil rights and constitutional freedom for all Americans.

And I promise you: We will never ever stop fighting for the right of every law-abiding American to protect themselves with a gun! I still remember that powerful news clip from Hurricane Katrina, when a reporter asked an African American woman—in the midst of all the devastation, looting and lawlessness—if she was okay. She paused, thought about it, and said, "I have my Bible and my gun—I'm fine!" Our strength is in the hearts of Americans like her all across this country.

And so to Joe Biden, Charles Schumer, Nancy Pelosi and their sycophants in the media, I say: If you don't care about our Second Amendment right to protect ourselves, then you don't care about us at all!

Don't talk to us about your plans for safety—unless you defend our Second Amendment rights.

continued on p.64 >>



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Billionaire Money Backs Gun Control

There are people in our society who claim to value freedom and democracy, but who vote differently either by ballot or by letting their dollars do the talking. It happens in every election. They beat their chests and run to the press claiming to stand for American values, but then support candidates who are transparent in their attempts to gut the Bill of Rights.

Don't be fooled—the anti-gun movement and their pro-confiscation politicians are well-funded. Billionaires like George Soros and Michael Bloomberg gave more money to anti-Second Amendment politicians in 2020 alone than most families will make in a lifetime. They might slow their spending some in the years between presidential elections, but they will still dole out enough to threaten candidates who cherish liberty at every level of government—yes, even down to city and county seats. They never rest. In fact, they are ceaselessly strategizing and expanding gun-control plans while claiming to support the principles of democracy and human rights.

The American Constitution and Bill of Rights are exceptional. At their creation, they were shining beacons of freedom the likes of which had never been seen in history. The Bill of Rights in particular was written to enumerate the natural rights of the people—these are not rights granted by the government, but granted by our maker. These rights are inherent for each person regardless of anyone's opinion on them. The Founding Fathers listed these natural rights to further emphasize that the government shall not legally trample on them.

One of the most important of these rights, of course, is the one we fight for daily at the NRA: the right to keep and bear arms for self-defense and the defense of our country. The Founding Fathers included it in the Bill of Rights because they were intelligent, well-read men who knew history, and were willing to give their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to defend their actions. They knew that arms control was about centralizing power and controlling people.

You don't need to personally like guns to appreciate how an armed society upholds the values of democracy—not just in America, but in all freedom-loving corners of the globe. Many seem to think that the kinds of things tyrants like Hitler and Stalin have done couldn't happen

today, but nothing could be further from the truth, as we have witnessed in many places around the world. Arms are the deterrent that allows free societies to flourish. The notion that “nothing stops a bad guy with a gun like a good guy with a gun” is understood in war and peace. Freedom fighters all over the world depend on Americans to lead the way in defending basic civil rights.

If these billionaire donors actually care about democracy, freedom and human rights, they should be using their resources to support the protection of our unique American Bill of Rights. Instead, it won't take much vigilance on anyone's part to spot them as they back every new gun-control measure and gun-grabbing political candidate they can possibly fund. If it's the destruction of our republic they seek, then they will throw more and more money toward that effort.

**YOU DON'T NEED TO
PERSONALLY LIKE GUNS TO
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IN ALL FREEDOM-LOVING
CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.**

The good news is that NRA members are paying attention, and we vote. As Edmund Burke said: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” I hope you all will heed those words and never give up on our rights.

We must stay alert, watch those who threaten our Second Amendment and fight them every step of the way, even as we face the most vicious and baseless attacks from opponents of freedom. Visit nraila.org to stay informed and involved. As you know, numbers matter in this fight, so talk to those around you about the importance of joining the NRA. As I always say, and deeply feel, we have a country to save. Freedom must stand, and preserving the Second Amendment in this country will ensure that it does!



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By Jason Ouimet
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA

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They'll Never Stop

Feb. 1 marked the beginning of New Zealand's Amnesty and Buyback 2021. Kiwi gun owners have once again been forced to file into police stations like criminals to hand over firearms that they lawfully purchased. The mandatory gun turn-in marked the second time in as many years that the New Zealand government has confiscated firearms from its citizens. These repeated attacks on law-abiding gun owners serve as a powerful example of anti-gun advocates' insatiable quest for control.

New Zealand's incessant assault on gun owners began in March 2019, following a high-profile shooting in Christchurch. On March 21, Labour Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern unilaterally prohibited the sale of semi-automatic center-fire guns with detachable magazines. Even before the legislation was enacted, Police Minister Stuart Nash warned, "police are gearing up to enable these weapons to be taken out of circulation."

Ardern's autocratic behavior earned praise from U.S. gun-control advocates. Twice-failed presidential candidate Hillary Clinton cheered on Twitter, "Under @jacindaardern's leadership, New Zealand has banned assault rifles and military-style semi-automatic weapons just six days after the Christchurch mosque attacks. Public servants didn't stop at offering thoughts and prayers. They chose to act." An enthused Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) remarked, "See. It's not that hard." Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said of Ardern's actions, "This is what leadership looks like."

The New Zealand Parliament went on to ratify Ardern's actions on April 10, 2019 with the Arms Amendment Act 2019. The legislation prohibited the possession of semi-automatic center-fire rifles and their corresponding magazines. The act also prohibited pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns with internal magazines capable of accepting more than five rounds and all semi-automatic shotguns capable of accepting a detachable magazine. Further, the measure provided for the first mandatory firearm "buyback" scheme, which ran until Dec. 20, 2019.

The mandatory "buyback" managed to capture roughly 60,000 firearms. However, the total fell well short of estimates. New Zealand gun-rights group Council of Licensed Firearms Owners estimated that 170,000 prohibited firearms remained in the possession of New Zealanders after the confiscation period.

Even before the end of the turn-in, New Zealand's anti-gun politicians were planning further gun control. In September 2019, Ardern declared that "owning a firearm is a privilege not a right," and made clear that her government intended to continue its attack on gun owners.

The chief concern of the gun controllers was New Zealand's lack of firearms registration, which hindered the confiscation process. Gun Control NZ co-founder Philippa Yasbek lamented to the press, "These weapons are unlikely to be confiscated by police because they don't know of their existence."

On June 18, 2020, the New Zealand Parliament passed the Arms Legislation Act 2020. Ensuring that future confiscation efforts would be easier to carry out, the legislation required national firearms registration. The act also imposed a wide set of restrictions that encumber almost every aspect of gun ownership.

The legislation reduced the time period that a first-time firearms license is valid from 10 to five years. In an appalling breach of privacy, the act required police to notify firearm license holders' physicians of their patients' gun ownership status. Physicians will be required to report the private health information of license holders to the police. The legislation also imposed new controls on the possession and transfer of ammunition.

Moreover, the act banned new classes of firearms. It prohibited semi-automatic pistols based on certain measurement criteria and caliber. It also targeted "Centrefire pump-action rifles capable of being used with a detachable magazine, or that have a non-detachable magazines (tubular or otherwise) that are capable of holding more than 10 cartridges." The mandatory "buyback" period for these firearms runs through the end of July.

New Zealand's National Party has taken to calling the 2021 confiscation campaign "gun buyback 2.0." National Party Police Spokesman Simeon Brown stated, "The first gun buyback was merely a marketing exercise. After spending \$103 million on the scheme, the Government couldn't even confirm whether it had made New Zealand safer or if it had collected all prohibited firearms."

New Zealand's experience offers an important lesson for American gun owners.

In a knee-jerk reaction, the New Zealand Parliament passed Ardern's initial raft of gun control by a margin of 119-1. The June 2020 gun-control legislation passed by a much narrower 63-50.

No doubt there are some lawmakers and gun owners who now wish they had more forcefully opposed Ardern's first wave of gun control now that her government's assault on gun owners has proven to be unending. If enough New Zealanders had pushed back, further attempts at gun control may have proven politically infeasible.

This is why U.S. gun owners must strenuously oppose any and all attacks on our rights.

Just as in New Zealand, our opponents will not stop short of total civilian disarmament.

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A profile photograph of Joe Biden speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit and has his mouth open as if in the middle of a speech. The background is dark blue.

Biden's Blatant Attack Would END THE U.S. FIREARM INDUSTRY As We Know It

By Jason Ouimet
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA



I have spent much of the last year reporting on Joe Biden's aggressive plans for gun control. Yet one of his most consequential proposals doesn't feature the headline-grabbing elements of a firearm ban or confiscation scheme (which, of course, Biden also supports).

The proposal I'm speaking of is repeal of the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA). If Biden succeeds in this goal, the industry that supplies firearms and ammunition to U.S. consumers, law enforcement and our military would be subject to death by a thousand cuts.

Biden has not been shy about his plans to abolish the PLCAA. His campaign website put it at the top of a very long list of anti-gun measures he hopes to enact. That website falsely claims, "This law protects [gun] manufacturers from being held civilly liable for their products—a protection granted to no other industry." It further states, "Biden will prioritize repealing this protection."

Indeed, Biden had promised his gun-control supporters in February 2020 that he would send a PLCAA repeal bill to Congress on his "first day in office." While he did not meet that timeline, on Feb. 14, Biden called on Congress to pass several gun-control measures, including a repeal of the PLCAA.

Whether the repeal effort happens sooner or later, Second Amendment supporters must understand the gravity of what this would mean to their rights and the importance of engaging politically to oppose it. To do that requires an understanding of the PLCAA's background, what the law actually does, and—perhaps most importantly—what it does not, despite false claims by Biden and other opponents of the act.

During the 1990s, gun-control activists inside and outside of the federal and various municipal governments launched a coordinated effort to sue the American firearms industry into oblivion ... or at least into subservience to their demands. The litigation was inspired, in part, by lawsuits against the tobacco industry.

The idea was to structure the suits so gun companies would be facing multiple cases in multiple jurisdictions simultaneously. And, they didn't even need to win. They only needed to keep the suits moving long enough to bleed the industry of the financial resources necessary to fight the meritless litigation.

The plaintiffs advanced a variety of theories in their complaints, but the essence of their claims was that firearm and ammunition manufacturers, distributors and dealers should be held civilly liable for crimes third parties committed with their products.



Legally, these cases faced an uphill battle, as they would require courts to ignore a basic and longstanding principle of tort law. New York's highest court explained this principle in a unanimous 2001 opinion denying various claims against firearms manufacturer Beretta.

"A defendant generally has no duty to control the conduct of third persons so as to prevent them from harming others," the court wrote. Courts were reluctant to depart from this principle, it explained, because of "practical concerns both about potentially limitless liability and about the unfairness of imposing liability for the acts of another." The rule had exceptions, however, for situations in which a special relationship existed between the defendant and the third party (such as employer/employee) or between the defendant and the injured party (such as an airline and its passengers).

You don't have to be a lawyer to appreciate the common sense of this rule. To cite another example, automobile makers and dealers are not legally responsible for the injuries of drunk drivers, nor, for that matter, are the brewers or distillers of the alcohol itself. To hold otherwise, as the court pointed out, would mean unlimited exposure to liability for the actions of random people that would make it impossible for anyone to engage in the business of manufacturing or distributing vehicles or alcohol.

It would also be unjust, because the person directly responsible for the harm to the victim is the intoxicated driver who chose to get behind the wheel, not a business engaged in lawful commerce.

Similarly, if a company manufactures firearms for law-abiding people to use for lawful purposes, and a criminal misuses one of the company's guns to hurt someone, the criminal is the responsible party.

The cases that went as far as a court opinion on the merits were in fact almost uniformly unsuccessful.

For the plaintiffs, however, winning wasn't necessarily the point. Sure, they hoped a sympathetic activist judge might stretch the law to help their case.

But the mere cost of fending off multiple cases in multiple courts across the nation could force a company into insolvency. Or the company might bow to the extortion and agree to a settlement in which it adopted "best practices" that just happened to

mirror the terms of unsuccessful gun-control legislation.

The existential threat these lawsuits posed to the gun industry—which not only supplies constitutionally protected products to the public but the arms on which the nation's security and law enforcement operations depend—was not lost on the lawmakers of the day. Thirty-four states enacted legislation to block these suits in their own courts.

Finally, in 2005, Congress followed their example with the bipartisan Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which creates a nationwide floor of protection from frivolous lawsuits against businesses in the firearms and ammunition sectors.

BIDEN HAS NOT BEEN SHY ABOUT HIS PLANS TO ABOLISH THE PLCAA. HIS CAMPAIGN WEBSITE PUT IT AT THE TOP OF A VERY LONG LIST OF ANTI-GUN MEASURES HE HOPES TO ENACT.

Specifically, the law prohibits, in state or federal court, a civil action or administrative proceeding by any person against a manufacturer or seller of a firearm, ammunition or "component part" thereof, or a trade association, for harms resulting from the criminal/unlawful misuse of their products by the person or a third party.

The law does not, as Joe Biden claims, grant these industries extraordinary protection unavailable to other businesses. Rather, it merely ensures firearm and ammunition companies are not subjected to extraordinary liability that wouldn't apply anywhere else.

Biden's insistence that the law prevents gun makers from being held civilly liable for their products is also false. If a firearm or ammunition cartridge malfunctions and causes injury, the maker can still be held liable for defects in its design or manufacture. Liability is also available for breaches of contract or warranty.

The PLCAA's focus is on immunity for liability arising from third-party wrongs, not for wrongs actually committed by the manufacturers, sellers or dealers themselves.

Thus, it still allows for common and legitimate forms of recovery to injured plaintiffs, including for injuries caused by the manufacturers' or sellers' own violations of gun-control laws or laws governing the sale or marketing of their

products or for negligent entrustment by sellers. The latter involves situations in which the seller knew or should have known that it was transferring a firearm to a dangerous or unstable person or someone who intended to cause unlawful harm with it.

As I write this, in fact, there are several cases pending that claim to fall under one or more of these exceptions. To be clear, the NRA believes that many of these suits trying to exploit the PLCAA's exceptions are just as legally meritless as the original cases that inspired the PLCAA itself. But they put a lie to the assertion that gun companies can act with impunity for their own alleged misdeeds.

What Joe Biden and other opponents of the PLCAA really hope to do is shift regulation of firearms from politically accountable lawmakers to unscrupulous trial lawyers and activist judges who need not worry about public opinion.

Once that happens, the scope of the industry's liability is limited only by the imagination of its sworn enemies. Guns could be deemed "too dangerous" for sale to the public for being too accurate, too inaccurate, too big, too small, for holding too many rounds or for having common features (like pistol grips or detachable magazines) that are mischaracterized as making them especially "lethal."

Gun makers and dealers facing ruin trying to defend their rights in court could be forced to agree to curb their lawful activities, for example by refusing to sell certain types of lawful products or by restricting the otherwise eligible customers to whom they make them available.

It is no exaggeration to say that while the Second Amendment protects your right to protect yourself, the PLCAA helps protect the Second Amendment. And it's no coincidence that the same activists pushing for its repeal are also pushing for the end of private firearm sales and transfers, as this would be the easiest way to get guns if retail shops closed or refused to transact with the general public. If both were to become law, there would be no lawful way to transfer a firearm in America!

And, without meaningful access to modern guns, the Second Amendment is nullified.

It's that simple.

And repeal of the PLCAA is that serious. **dh**

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By Todd Grable
Executive Director of
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**THIS SWEEPSTAKES IS
ANOTHER WAY FOR NRA
TO SAY "THANKS" FOR
ALL YOUR HARD WORK
TO PRESERVE THE
SECOND AMENDMENT.**

an important way for NRA to raise the funds we need to fight and win the huge battles that are now coming our way.

No contribution is required to enter this sweepstakes, and a contribution won't improve your chances of winning a prize.

But I do hope you'll consider giving your extra support when you enter. Every dollar you contribute will directly help NRA fight to save the Second Amendment.

And remember, the deadline for our Fast Entry Prize Drawing is at midnight on April 30th. So, don't miss out – enter at **NRAwinThisTruck.org** today!

Thank you again for leading the fight to preserve American freedom...and best of luck in this extraordinary NRA sweepstakes!

Todd Grable



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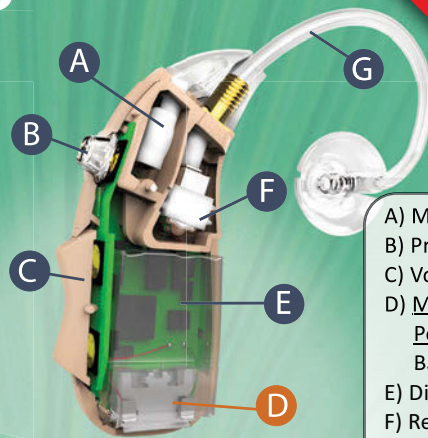
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HUNTER SAFETY THANKS TO OUR NRA

By J. Scott Olmsted, Editor in Chief

In July 1952, National Rifle Association members learned in an article in *The American Rifleman* that New York had strived for five years and had thus succeeded in creating a “systematic and thorough program aimed at reducing hunting accidents.” In the article, reprinted from the *New York State Conservationist* in the only NRA official journal of the time, author P.W. Fosburgh explained the New York Conservation Department had concluded the “most practical means” of reducing hunting accidents was to “make sure persons to whom hunting licenses are issued are properly qualified to handle firearms safely.” Since the state lacked sufficient resources, it had turned to the NRA to develop a firearm training course: “Legally designated as the New York Conservation Department’s agent, the NRA has now been conducting such courses for two full years.”

Fosburgh concluded: “This approach to the problem of hunting accidents represents a pioneer effort, and its outstanding success has attracted the attention of many other states. Credit should go largely to the NRA—and in particular to the Junior Hunter Instructors who have worked hard for no material reward and too little thanks. They have saved many lives.”

Indeed those lives were the first of many saved across decades thanks to the “pioneer effort” of our NRA, which, in 1949 when asked by New York, developed the first effective hunter education curriculum that could be mirrored across the country. It is a story told in *American Hunter* before but it deserves another, fuller telling in light of our organization’s 150th anniversary.

By the middle of the 20th century, American hunters were all too familiar with hunting accidents—such stories were published across sporting media. Added to this was a factor created by the nascent success of the American conservation movement and a post-World War II economic boom: many hunters. A prominent story regarding this was published in *The American Rifleman* in December 1948.

In “Will Hunters Learn?” author Pierre Pulling explained he had spent as a game warden 14 days the year before at a mule deer check station in a Western state. “The shooting was easy in an area that had been closed for some twenty years,” he wrote. However, he lamented, “I doubt if over a third of the total had a gun that was properly sighted-in, reasonable shooting skill, reasonable hunting judgment, and such minor equipment as

Photo: Mitch Kezar / Windigoimages.com

a rope and a sharp knife. Fully half of the hunters, if you delved for the truth, had tragicomic experiences ... The answer to all this," he concluded, "is education."

The next year, in June 1949, NRA Executive Director C.B. Lister, in a letter to members in *The American Rifleman*, explained: "Education and training is the primary need—equally among shooters and among game commissions and their enforcement agents."

Following Lister's op-ed, author Al Look railed at the outset of "Hunted Hunters," a feature article, that 17 hunters had been "slaughtered along with 72,000 deer during the so-called Colorado big-game season in 1948. ... One hundred thirty-two thousand hunters took to the field opening day." It was enough, he reported, to drive western Colorado cattlemen and sporting clubs to suggest to anyone listening that before obtaining a license "a hunter must prove he can tell a gun from a ramrod, and know how to handle same."

The NRA was listening. In 1951, in "The Facts About Hunting Accidents," published in *The American Rifleman*, author J.A. Harper noted the number of American hunters had increased from 7.6 million in 1940 to 12.6 million in 1950. Amid this, and amid "more strident demands from game commissions and law enforcement agencies for more restrictive hunting and firearms legislation," the NRA had begun in 1946 to create a Uniform Hunter Casualty Form. In 1950, game departments from Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ontario recommended the NRA as the collecting agency of such forms and to disseminate data gleaned from them; the resolution was backed by a number of non-governmental organizations.

In 1950, 832 North Americans were injured or killed while hunting. The picture described in what came to be called the Uniform Hunter Casualty Report by the NRA was the first attempt by any organization to ascribe details to hunting accidents, but it was by no means complete. Only 30 states and two Canadian provinces had returned NRA forms, though 43 states and five provinces had pledged to do so. But the report was an important investment in the future of hunting, and represented "the day not too far off" when enough information could be obtained and digested to reduce injury afield.

All of this was coalescing at a time when a unique voice rose among NRA ranks, when Gen. Merritt Edson became NRA Executive Director in June 1951.

Edson, a Vermont native, was a U.S. Marine hero. He served in France in World War I, became a Marine aviator, served in Nicaragua in the 1920s where he earned his first Navy Cross and was a "China Marine" in the 1930s. He was a firing member of Marine Corps shooting teams and in 1935 and '36 captained the teams to top honors at the National Matches. In 1941 he took command of the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment, and retrained it to become the 1st Marine Raider Battalion,

popularly known as Edson's Raiders. On Guadalcanal in September 1942, his leadership during the battle of Lunga Ridge inspired his men to rename the landmark Edson's Ridge, and it inspired Congress to award Edson the Medal of Honor. During the war in the Pacific, "Red Mike" also earned another Navy Cross and a Silver Star. Merritt Edson retired from the Marine Corps in 1947.

At Edson's urging, the NRA devoted more attention to hunting, acknowledging that program shifts were necessary to serve the needs of shooters amid an evolving landscape. He recognized the development of hunter education and the Uniform Hunter Casualty Report were solid starts. He understood the popularity of big-bore

shooting had waned, that suitable ranges were scarce in a nation shifting to urban life, that development encroached upon local shooting clubs. So Edson pivoted to keep training, same as Marines always do.

Following a successful launch in 1950, the NRA in 1952 expanded its New York hunter education curriculum nationally. Thereafter state after state adopted the NRA program or one like it. The organization strengthened its investment in a junior initiative begun in 1950 that included 15-foot air ranges wherein youngsters could qualify for shooting medals with BB guns under qualified instruction. This was an important development when suitable ranges for centerfire and rimfire arms were scarce and prospects for their construction were not imminent. In 1951, the 25th anniversary of the original NRA junior program, more than 200,000 boys and girls participated in shooting activities. That year, there were more than 3,000 junior clubs in high schools and colleges or at installations maintained by cooperating organizations including Future Farmers of America, 4-H clubs, the Boy Scouts, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

The NRA effort continues to pay dividends after the seeds were sown decades ago.

In the 1960s, the five-year average of hunting accidents in New York was 19 per 100,000 hunters; today the five-year average is 1.8 per 100,000. According to the New York DEC, hunting accidents there hit an all-time low in 2019 when among 12 incidents reported only one was a fatal injury. In the 1960s, hunters in Colorado averaged nine fatal and 24 non-fatal accidents per year. Since 1970 when hunter-education course completion was mandated by hunter demand, that number has dropped steadily. Today, Colorado sees about five non-fatal hunting accidents per year and 1.2 fatalities per year, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

In Pennsylvania, hunting incident rates have declined by 80 percent since hunter education training began there in 1959 ... we could continue to note successes based on NRA leadership. Today, our NRA continues to invest in the future of hunting. A prime example is NRA Hunter Education Online, a curriculum we developed and offer free to any agency that chooses to adopt it ... but that is another story. *ah*

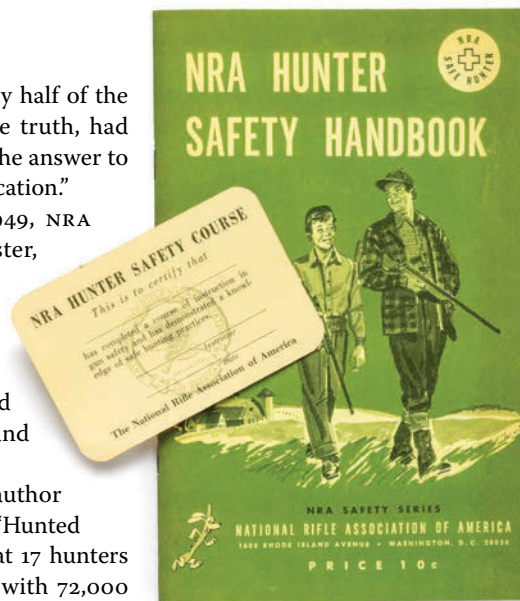


Photo: Forrest MacCormack



By David Herman, Associate Editor

Passing on the skills to hunt is an age-old endeavor memorialized in many forms, from campfire stories to full-on works of literature. Every aspiring hunter dreams of that perfect first kill, and every mentor longs for the ideal setting to make it happen. The perfect scenario mixes just enough natural beauty, anticipation and excitement to make a new hunter race back to the woods for more.

In the quest for an engaging hunt however, the temperament of your hunter has quite a lot to do with the equation. So what happens if that first time isn't turning out exactly Faulkner-esque? Let's take a look, broadly speaking, at four types of hunters I have encountered when mentoring first kills in the deer woods, and how best to initiate newbies into our ancient society of providers.

The Natural

This is the person everyone dreams about. Whether a youth or adult, he is in it from the word go. He shows up early,

and he has already asked about all the gear he'll need. About the only issue you have in the woods is getting him to stop scaring off the deer with incessant questions about every aspect of the hunt.

Crafting the perfect hunt for this newbie is easy. Ensure he's passed a hunter safety course then simply set a time and place to meet. Double-check his gun safety skills (as you should do with everyone on this list). He will quite literally take it from there. Something you forgot to tell him? He'll ask you. Miss a footfall in the woods? He'll hear it. Those footfalls will likely be squirrels of course, but hey, the details take time. Whether the deer are moving fast or bedded tight, this hunter is sure to have an exciting time.

The Tentative One

This hunter resembles the "natural" ... all the way up until go-time. A little bit more fidgety, he'll take a while to settle in, but be ready for a long wait once he does. Often a nature enthusiast, he'll revel in the time spent outdoors, and

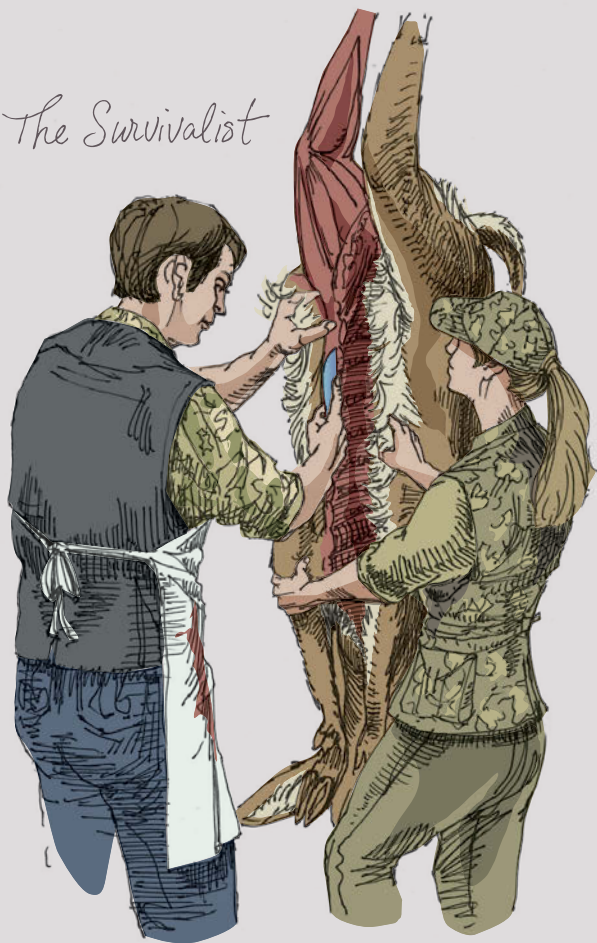
may even have some interesting tidbits to tell you about the plants and animals around you. This near-idyllic state of affairs will continue all the way up until you have game in range.

At this point, uncertainty springs to the surface. Buck fever, with the accompanying hard shakes, will probably appear. Excuses will start to trickle out: "I can't see anything through the scope," "I can't get a good angle," "my position is off." You'll watch animals walk by all day with no shot—be they bucks or does.

When this arises, there's only one thing to do. Shoot one yourself. I know, I know, this sounds like an incredibly selfish solution, but hear me out. Did you ever ride a bike before you saw someone else do it? Did you drive a car before you saw someone else do it? A lot of this tentativeness, particularly among newly interested adult hunters, comes from never having seen the process go down.

So shoot one yourself, take your hunter to the carcass, show him how to field-dress it and, if you do it yourself,

The Survivalist



how to butcher the meat. Share the meat when you're done, to make sure he knows he still contributed, and earned some of the kill. Once the process is seen clearly, from beginning to end, take out your hunter again. I guarantee he'll have an easier time putting meat on the ground.

The Survivalist

This woodsman isn't really all that into hunting but wants to learn anyway, and who can blame him? Hunting is a useful life skill, and many folks feel far more comfortable with the knowledge that they can drop, clean and butcher their own food. Issue is, a lot of hunting is learning the skill of patience, and as one can just as easily do that by staring at a brick wall, it can be hard to get the lesson across. This hunter will generally start to fidget after an hour or so, and will begin checking his watch with regularity not long after.

The best way to go about introducing this hunter is a more active type of hunt. A spot-and-stalk deer hunt or a duck hunt at your favorite honey hole

will work better than a traditional trees-and-outing. Anything—more glassing or moving or straight-up shooting—besides a sit-and-wait hunt is a good option to get this hunter a first kill without the wait. From here you can ease into still-hunting, as he'll be more liable to accept a longer period of idle time once he's already familiar with the reward of a successful outing.

If you don't have the aforementioned options, try an early-season pre-rut deer hunt. Remember, this hunter isn't after a real wall-hanger. Besides, prior to the rut, deer are much easier to pattern. Find a stand or spot where you're seeing deer daily and set up there. Chances are your survivalist will have a decent doe in the crosshairs by first day's end.

Sammy the Sleeper

Sammy is usually a youth hunter and, guess what, he really doesn't want to be here. Whether he's a family member or a close friend, Sammy would rather not wake up for an early hunt; given the chance, at the first occasion he will fall

Sammy the Sleeper



right back to sleep. Something like a high-volume duck hunt rather than a sit-and-wait deer hunt is your only chance at grabbing his interest.

Would you like my honest opinion? Give him a year or so. The worst way to make a hunter is to take to the woods a kid whose heart isn't in it. All he or she will likely remember is cold, fatigue and a sense of crushing boredom. In this case it's best to wait for the hunter to ask you to go. Let Sammy sleep.

Whether your hunter is a natural, a little tentative, survival-minded or even a "Sammy," the most important thing to remember is to make yourself a willing and accessible resource. After all, few people, whether they resemble a character described in a category above or something else entirely, will ever even attempt a first hunt without the confidence imparted by a mentor. So this season, find someone who wants to give hunting a go and be the person who lends that helping hand. I guarantee you won't regret it. **ah**

ANALYZE THE TURKEY SEASON FOR THE PERFECT STRATEGY

By Mark Kayser, Field Editor



Like whitetail hunters strategizing to hunt the pre-rut, rut and post-rut, turkey hunters also need to consider the ever-changing circumstances of the spring breeding season. If you fail to recognize changing wild turkey behavior throughout this spring ritual, it could cost you a gobbler. Both hens and gobblers feel the effects of changing hormone levels as daylight hours increase with spring's arrival. The hormones, combined with associated breeding and nesting behavior, alter turkey conduct on a weekly, if not daily basis. Breeding may begin in late February or March in the most southern of latitudes, but expect most propagation in April and early May. Analyze these ongoing spring changes for your best shot at a turkey dinner.

Early Spring Congregation

As winter transitions to spring, large winter flocks of turkeys disband into smaller groups. Your hunt may begin with some

flocks still in a larger, winter dimension. This means more eye-balls, more calling competition, and a less likely chance your calls may have an impact on the real rowdiness occurring before you. Hens may also not be quite ready for breeding even though the hormonal boost in toms nears its peak. With so much going on in a congregated community of turkeys, a whitetail-like approach may be best.

Strategy

One good aspect about winter flocks is their predictability. The schedule may not be as reliable as the rising sun, but with enough scouting, you may begin to see a reoccurring pattern. Watch for turkeys feeding in the same fields, scratching in mast-heavy coulees and sunning along south-facing slopes.

Some flocks, especially northern or western groups, often return daily to the same location, particularly roosts, whereas eastern or southern counterparts may only repeat a pattern every few days. Note the preferred location and be in place when you expect the group to return. Calling may or not be needed, but be ready with an enticer. A hen decoy accompanied by a quarter-strut jake lures both the boss hen and any toms.

Testosterone Jumpstart

When you notice flocks shrinking in size and gobbling increasing, you know that breeding season is set to launch. Compare this period to the whitetail pre-rut when testosterone peaks in white-tail bucks prior to estrus breeding. Some hens will inevitably be ready for breeding early, but the majority will slowly begin allowing the advances of amorous toms to progress.



Cold spells or heatwaves could decelerate this period, but not for long, as hormones are in the driver's seat now.

Strategy

This pre-rut for turkeys is when a roost setup stands out. To guarantee success, determine the most likely landing strip after locating the roost location. Next, set your morning alarm an hour or more earlier than normal. You want to quietly slip into shotgun range of the landing zone and place a realistic decoy at its edge well before dawn. Now creep back into the darkness and wait for the turkeys to wake up.

The toms will likely gobble before the hens at dawn's first hint. Once the hens begin to tree yelp, join in. Match their cadence and volume. Some hens are OK with your presence and will converse politely while toms interrupt. A gang of gals could glide right to you with a tom in tow. A boss hen may crank up the conversation. It's fine to increase the tempo, as it could annoy a hen and direct a tom right to your lap.

Nesting Annoyances

It begins slowly, but nesting picks up steam as toms fan for the ladies. Once hens have discreetly ascertained the location of their nest, they begin laying one egg daily. Breeding may continue throughout the two-week period it takes her to accumulate approximately a dozen eggs. Interestingly, hens can store semen for efficiency, voiding extracurricular activities for some irritated toms.

As hens deposit eggs, it causes a disruption in "the Force" of the flock. A single hen's absence may not be noticed, but as more and more hens leave to accumulate eggs, a tom finds himself lonelier and lonelier. Hens won't tend to the nest 24/7 until the last egg is deposited, but the flock slowly becomes fragmented. Hens may return to the flock or simply feed throughout the day solo, possibly returning to a community roost.

Strategy

Although it goes against the grain, a midday assault may be the answer. As toms busy themselves in the morning with the last of breeding duties, they oftentimes find themselves home alone from midmorning on.

Sleep in and hit the woods right before the brunch hour. Toms will have completed breeding with hens departing for egg laying soon after. Troll the woods with a series of soft, lonesome yelps to fire up any unattached toms wandering without a hookup. Ramp up the banter if he turns up the volume for a fever-pitch meeting. Stay in cover and make the gobbler hunt you until he appears within shotgun range.

Not Today ... I Have A Headache And A Nest

Toward the end of hunting season, most hens ignore toms for one mission: nesting duty. Once all eggs have been laid a hen begins nonstop incubation with only brief recesses from the nest. Her only other activity is to reposition eggs approximately once an hour. This goes on for up to 28 days.

During this absence, toms search for one last Tinder tryst. That may sound like the recipe for high success but there are hitches before any hooray ending. First, toms have been hunted by you and others relentlessly for a month or more of the spring season. Second, the hormones that put them in danger for a winning ruse earlier begin to subside as summer approaches. They lose the drive and don't have a little blue pill resolution.

Strategy

Patience is a virtue and if you combine it with subtle calling in known turkey alleyways, it could make a tom peek around a tree trunk for a shot. If you do engage a tom but he stalls like a Tesla without a charge, a move may be in order. Circle around the tom with caution to stay on his level and begin a new conversation. You can use the same call, but even a change in pitch or cadence could spark action from a careful tom rethinking every move.

If toms refuse to take part in the dating game, consider staking a hen decoy along a field known for previous turkey showings. Hide within shotgun range, either in cover or in a blind, and wait for a drifter tom. A few soft yelps may briefly ignite his late-season, foot-dragging nature.

By and large, turkey seasons extend for weeks. Stay on top of the turkey behavior changes throughout and you'll have a tactic ready when you find a window for your spring hunt. **ah**



Hot early-season action begins to wane as breeding habits take both hens and toms out of the game. Adapt your tactics to match the changing breeding behaviors, and you'll up your odds of meeting a tom this spring.

WILD TURKEY CHOW MEIN

By Brad Fenson



Photo: Author

Cooking wild turkey can be a challenge. It dries out quickly and can become nearly too-tough-to-eat in short order. There is, however, a way to avoid that. By using a marinade and adding extra moisture when cooking, you can create a mouth-watering dish that will have your dining companions searching for a second helping, and have you looking for another opportunity to fill a tag.

Thinly sliced turkey breast marinated in Asian flavors and sautéed in a hot pan is just about the easiest way to prepare a bird. Add in a mix of your favorite vegetables and some chow mein noodles, and you've got a healthy meal fit for turkey camp as well as the family dinner table, with a taste of moist and flavorful wild turkey in every forkful.

INGREDIENTS

- ❑ 1 turkey breast, cut into ½-inch strips
- ❑ 2 Tbsp canola oil
- ❑ 1 medium onion, diced
- ❑ 2 celery ribs, diced
- ❑ 6 cremini mushrooms, diced
- ❑ 4 cups broccoli, cut into florets
- ❑ 1 cup snow peas
- ❑ 2 heads baby bok choy, sliced
- ❑ 1½ cups chicken stock, 1 cup reserved
- ❑ 2 Tbsp corn starch
- ❑ 1 pkg (12 ozs.) chow mein or ho fun noodles
- ❑ 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- ❑ 2 Tbsp canola oil

MARINADE

- ❑ 2 Tbsp black bean and garlic sauce
- ❑ 3 Tbsp soy sauce
- ❑ 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ❑ 2 Tbsp fresh ginger, crushed or minced
- ❑ 2 Tbsp canola oil
- ❑ 1 Tbsp sesame oil

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Mix marinade ingredients in a resealable 1-gallon plastic bag or large plastic container. Add the sliced turkey and ensure evenly coated. Place in the fridge to marinate for 2-6 hours.
- 2.** Prepare the noodles according to the package directions. Season with soy sauce and canola oil. Set prepared noodles aside.
- 3.** Heat a large wok on medium-high heat. Add marinated turkey to wok and cook in small batches, stirring occasionally until browned and cooked to medium-rare, about 4-5 minutes. Remove from wok and set aside.
- 4.** Add canola oil to the wok and heat over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery and mushrooms to the wok and stir for one minute. Then add the broccoli, snow peas and bok choy and continue stirring the mixture as it cooks for two minutes. Add ½ cup of chicken broth to help steam the vegetables, and cook for one more minute.
- 5.** Whisk the cornstarch into the remaining cup of chicken broth and slowly add it to the cooking vegetables. Continue to stir and turn the vegetables from the bottom of the wok until the sauce thickens.
- 6.** Add the cooked turkey to the vegetable mixture, stir, and continue to cook on medium-high heat for one minute.
- 7.** Spread the noodles on a large serving platter and top with the vegetable and turkey mixture. Serve and enjoy.

.....
Chef's Tip: Slice the turkey breast while it's still partially frozen to simplify the task and to keep pieces evenly sized. Cook the turkey first, in small batches to allow the meat to brown evenly and reach a medium to medium-rare temperature. The turkey will be tender and moist when added back to the stir fry with extra broth for a sauce.



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Great Plains Gobblers

Turkeys in Nebraska's Sandhills can come in several varieties—and they can come from any direction.

By Brad Fitzpatrick

It was May in Nebraska's Sandhills country, and by midmorning the temperature was rising quickly. I'd spent the night before in a tent in turkey camp and I appreciated the growing warmth, but the heat put an abrupt halt to all turkey talk.

That sudden silent treatment was an about-face compared to the morning's activity. Turkeys were sounding off even before we left camp that day, and after sunrise, toms gobbled in response to guide Keith Metz's calls seemingly from every direction. Even though the morning's activity slowed by midday and no birds came close enough for a shot, it had been a successful start to my Nebraska hunt. The gobble of a wild turkey is the anthem of spring, and hearing the sound resonate from the surrounding hills was an unforgettable experience.

Keith and I were crossing a cattle pasture to try calling on the other side of the hill when another unforgettable sound filled the air: the buzz of an angry



rattlesnake. To my right, in the mouth of a badger's burrow, a prairie rattler lay half-hidden in the shadows. When we approached too closely the rattler twisted its body in tight brown coils and retreated deeper into the chamber. Eventually the snake disappeared from sight and only the rattling that resonated from the earth betrayed its presence.

"I guess the warm weather brought them out," Keith said.

"I guess I'll watch where I step from now on," I replied.

Our Sandhills turkey camp lay a valley just outside the village of Arnold in Custer County, Neb. Cory Peterson of Hidden Valley Outfitters served as our guide and host on the trip. With access to 55,000 acres, Cory had plenty of property for us to hunt and was excited to explore the country. The Sandhills region is one of the most underrated mixed-bag hunting areas in the nation. In the fall it's a prime destination for deer hunters who want to tag a big buck (a whitetail or mule deer) while avoiding crowds, and the region may be the best-kept secret in upland bird hunting. In spring, turkey hunting takes center stage in the emerald hills.

The camaraderie that exists in hunting camp can't be matched when staying in a hotel or lodge, and by setting up camp in a valley near the center of our hunting area we were close to the action. Writer Joe Arterburn had been organizing his spring turkey hunting camp in the Sandhills for years, and I appreciated an invitation to attend. Joe was joined by Nathan Borowski and Nathan's wife, Kati.

One fascinating aspect of hunting Nebraska turkeys is that many of these birds are hybrids of subspecies reintroduced to the area to restock depleted populations in the 1900s. When you're hunting the Sandhills, the bird answering your call may be a Merriam's, a Rio Grande or Eastern, or it may be a hybrid of two, or even all three. To further complicate matters, many Nebraska wild turkeys carry some DNA from domestic birds. The predominant subspecies in the area we were hunting was the Merriam's, but it's theoretically possible to kill two different subspecies and be halfway to a grand slam with one trip to Nebraska.

I wasn't particularly concerned with slams or genetics. I simply wanted to get close enough to a gobbler to get a shot without being bitten by a rattlesnake. In Ohio, where I grew up, most turkey hunting takes place in timber or on the edges of agricultural fields, so hunting the wide-open spaces of Nebraska was a significant change of scenery that demanded alternate tactics. Sandhills birds were abundant and vocal, but the terrain makes it easy for them to remain just out of reach of hunters.

The morning developed into a cat-and-mouse game that involved locating birds then trying to slip within range without spooking the gobbler. Sometimes there



For years writer and Nebraska native Joe Arterburn has hosted a spring turkey hunting camp in the Sandhills.

wasn't enough cover to get close, and other times there was so much ground to cross that by the time Keith and I reached the area where we had seen or heard a gobbler he was already gone. Toms responded to the calls frequently but they refused to move in our direction.

Near the end of day one we were set up on a hill covered with scattered pines overlooking a box canyon. We'd been calling with a gobbler two hillsides away that, like so many other birds, simply wouldn't close the gap.

"There's a tom right in front of us," Keith said and pointed a quarter-mile down the canyon. The bird walked away from us along a cattle trail in the bottom of the box canyon and we decided to try to cut it off. To do so we'd have to crest the hill and cut across the opposite slope to reach the mouth of the canyon before the bird escaped. We made our move. When we'd last seen the turkey it had been casually heading down the length of the canyon, picking at anything in the dirt that looked edible, so if he continued at that pace, we'd be in place to intercept him with time to spare.

When we reached the end of the

canyon we waited. The sun was dropping lower in the sky and casting long shadows and I watched a group of three mule deer move out of the mouth of another canyon to feed. Their coats turned from a shiny copper-brown in the evening sun to slate gray at twilight. We continued waiting for the tom, which I had noticed was a Rio (or at least a Rio-colored mongrel bird).

I had just eased my right boot around a pine bough ...

But the turkey never showed and twilight eventually faded to darkness. The first stars were shining above our tents by the time Keith and I reached camp.

Kati had prepared dinner and I met Nathan and Joe in the cook tent. It seemed all of the hunters were having the same experience: there were plenty of birds but they weren't inclined to come to the calls.

The area hadn't experienced excessive hunting pressure and it seemed that our trouble stemmed from the large number of receptive hens in the area. No matter how sweet our siren songs we simply couldn't pull any gobblers from the real thing. We shrugged and headed toward our tents. With any luck we'd stumble upon a lone-some bird or two at first light.

Yapping coyotes on some distant hilltop served as a wake-up call shortly after 4 in the morning. In the chill of predawn, I worked my way out of my warm sleeping bag and dressed. Halfway into my first cup of coffee a gobbler started up. Nebraska turkeys seemed to sound off earlier than any birds I've encountered elsewhere—or maybe the abundance of receptive hens and the excitement of the season prompted the gobblers to rise early.

Keith led me to a tree-lined draw where birds had roosted in the past and we waited. A native of Wyoming who guides for a variety of species in several states, Keith is an adept turkey caller and never pushes birds too hard. Our runaround on the first day had everything to do with too many seductive voices calling toms in several different directions, and on the second morning we set out to find a bird that wasn't committed to a group of hens or, that failing, we would challenge a tom by acting like a rival in the hopes that he would become so incensed that another male was moving in on his harem that he would be inclined to fight.

Birds were scattered up and down the draw and when they came down from the trees it was the same mad rush to find a mate that we'd experienced the day before. Some jakes were interested in our calls, but we weren't interested in them. There were too many big toms patrolling these waters and, sooner or later, we'd hit the right note to bring them running.

By late morning the birds quieted again, and we ended up on a hilltop overlooking a narrow creek lined with oaks. We'd walked perhaps a couple miles and the caffeine was wearing away, so after I checked for badger holes and angry rattlers I stretched out to rest in the sun.

Sometime later I woke up when Keith said he'd heard birds on a nearby ridge.

"Should we go after them?" I wanted to go after the birds if he thought there was some hope of actually intercepting a gobbler, but my bed in the soft prairie



grass was comfortable, and the breeze had picked up, countering the growing heat.

Keith said it was a good location, that there were birds in the area and that two primary ridges would allow us to cover a lot of ground. He said he thought there were quite a few birds in the area.

We spent the afternoon watching turkeys in every direction; these birds didn't seem as inclined to give up the hunt for a mate under the midday sun as gobblers had the previous day. We called and the toms responded, and at one point we had no fewer than four gobblers on the hook in different directions, though none seemed inclined to move from their relative positions. If we could close the gap we knew we might rile one of the birds enough to command its full attention.

For the next two hours, we worked out a plan while watching different toms. The one that I thought might be our bird was another Rio with caramel-colored tail tips that came to full strut over and over through the day. But eventually the tom's attention was directed at a hen on a ridgetop and we were forgotten. There was a big Merriam's tom that strutted back and forth on the same open patch of ground on a ridge directly across from our location, and we watched him over an hour as he put on a show despite there being no hens in sight. Another tom was behind us gobbling infrequently, but he sounded close. It was the most gobblers I ever recall seeing from one patch of ground in my years as a turkey hunter, and the birds were quite vocal considering the late hour.

"We'll get one of these birds," Keith said. I felt that way, too. I felt there are worse



The author and his guide slipped into a canyon and used the Sandhills to conceal their approach on a Merriam's tom. After he'd crept close on the same grass-covered hill, Fitzpatrick closed the hunt with a burst of No. 5 shot.

Photos: Author

problems for a turkey hunter than having to decide which of four toms to pursue.

It ended up being the Merriam's, and he did something I have not seen before or since. After his hours of display, he seemed to be spent, and the turkey actually sat down in the tall prairie grass. His red head was barely visible and he looked very much like a hen sitting on a nest. Apparently, the Merriam's had a long morning too and decided to take a nap in the grass just as we had a couple hours before.

Our game plan developed. The bird was 150 yards to our east across the draw; if we could slip down into the canyon that separated the two ridges, we could use the hill as cover and approach the bird. If we were quiet and he was still there the plan might work.

"I'm going to pick a landmark," Keith said. He zeroed in on a half-dead pine that would serve as a guidepost when we were in the canyon. The bird was in the tall grass beyond it.

We eased into the canyon and out of sight of the bird. We worked our way through the oaks and longleaf pines, hoping the bubbling stream in the valley would cover the sound of our approach. With his half-dead tree as a waypoint, Keith led me up and out of the valley to the place where the forest gave way to green grass higher on the slope.

"He should be right there," Keith said. He motioned me forward and I kept the muzzle of the Stoeger angled forward and ahead of me as I waited for any sign of the bird. I saw Keith had dropped down, and he turned and pointed into the grass.

I moved farther up, waiting for the bird to appear. I had just eased my right boot around a fallen pine bough when I saw the turkey's red and blue head appear above the grass. I was busted, but as the tom turned to make his escape I fired.

The magnum load of No. 5 shot hit hard and the gobbler disappeared in the grass. His wing flapped in the air and down hard against the ground, making the grass shudder all around.

"Got him," I said and moved forward.

It wasn't a conventional turkey hunt, but we had our bird. Even as we lined up the gobbler for pictures I could see turkeys walking up the spine of a distant ridge. Keith got word that Joe Arterburn had also killed a turkey, and with wide smiles we headed back to our remote camp in the valley by the creek. Sunset was approaching and we wanted to be back before darkness fell. With the weight of the gobbler on my shoulder, I walked across the open prairie. Before I hung the bird on the side of the tent and washed for dinner I was working on a plan to get back to Nebraska the following spring. **ah**



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Delta Detours

Often the best part of a hunting camp is a side trip that delivers local flavor that's savored for years. As the home of William Faulkner, Robert Johnson's crossroads and more, the Mississippi Delta could easily sidetrack a hunter itching for a taste of history.

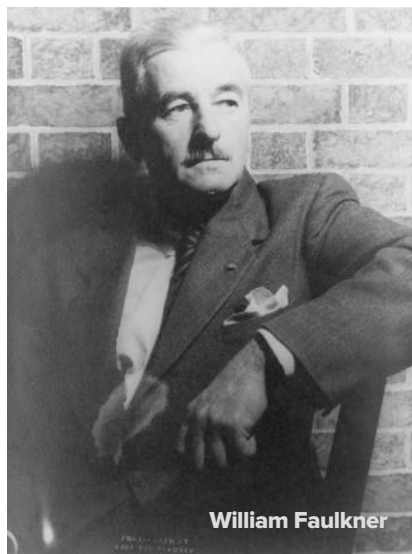
By **Bryce M. Towsley**, Field Editor

"It was right here," Nick Tarlton said. "What was?" I asked. "Where Roosevelt refused to shoot the bear. Nobody knows the exact location—that's been lost to history—but we are within 100 yards of the very spot."

We were deep in a Mississippi Delta swamp, invisible in the moonless, pre-dawn gloom. We were surrounded by tall timber and standing in knee-deep water.

Lost in the depths of my mind, I had been thinking about what a huge role the Delta has played in American history as well as in hunting lore. William Faulkner hunted near here, and just up the road a bit Robert Johnson set his fate at the crossroads. The Roosevelt thing caught me off guard, even though I knew the story.

President Theodore Roosevelt was part of a large party of hunters hosted by Gov. Andrew Longino and hunting near Onward, Miss. Roosevelt's guide was the legendary Holt Collier. Collier was born a slave. As a young boy he disobeyed his master and followed him and his son, who was Collier's best friend, as they journeyed to fight the Civil War. Collier stowed away on a riverboat and caught up with them in Memphis, Tenn. They let him stay and he gained fame



and glory for his skills and bravery.

Holt Collier was a legendary hunter, killing his first bear at 10 and with more than 3,000 bears to his lifetime credit. It's said that's more bears than Boone and Crockett combined.

T.R.'s luck was not good, and while most of the party had taken a bear, he had not. Collier's dogs bayed up a big bear and he bugled for Roosevelt to come and shoot it. Before he could get there the bear killed one of the dogs. Collier didn't want to shoot the bear, so he hit

it over the head with his rifle, bending the barrel. It must have dazed the bear because Collier then lassoed it and tied it to a tree so it wouldn't escape while they waited for Roosevelt.

When T.R. arrived, he refused to shoot a bear that was tied up. Popular legend says it was a cub, but it was an adult male bear. The objection was to the fact the bear was tied up, not that it was too small. Even worse, the bear was injured enough that somebody in the party later was forced to put it down.

Roosevelt was so impressed with Collier that he gave him a Winchester rifle and hunted with him again in 1907. Holt Collier National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi is named in his honor.

The hunt was high-profile with a lot of press along, so T.R.'s action got a lot of ink. Perhaps the best known is a political cartoon by Clifford Berryman titled "Drawing The Line In Mississippi," which erroneously showed the bear as a small, pathetic cub. This cartoon ran in *The Washington Post* on Nov. 16, 1902.

Morris Michtom saw the drawing of Roosevelt and created a tiny, soft bear cub and put it in the shop window with a sign: "Teddy's bear." He sent another bear to Roosevelt and got permission to use his name. The Teddy Bear was a big hit and Michtom founded the Ideal Novelty and Toy Company and made the Teddy Bear a household name.

I found it awe-inspiring to think I was treading in the footsteps of one of the greatest presidents in American history. I didn't know it then, but before the week was over I would be walking in a great many footsteps of American history.

While I was lost in that thought, the sky brightened and suddenly we were under attack by hordes of ducks. So I turned my attention to that for the moment.

It was my first time hunting flooded timber, and that morning was all I hoped it would be. We were done, limited out, in just a few hours.

I was in Mississippi to visit William Faulkner's home. Faulkner often wrote about hunting and was an avid hunter himself. Still, I have long had a love-hate relationship with his writing.

I mentioned that over lunch later that day. "No kidding," replied Tony Kinton, one of my oldest friends and a fellow writer.



"I taught Faulkner as a college professor and I am not sure I understand his writing about half the time. Look at the book *As I Lay Dying* for example. There is an entire chapter that contains one sentence, 'My mother is a fish.' That has to make you go, 'Huh?'"

As a writer as well as an avid reader, I tend to have two reactions to Faulkner. As a reader, I often slam the book shut in frustration and boredom. "They said he was a genius," I think, "so clearly I am not smart enough to understand him." As a writer, when I glimpse that genius, often in the hunting stories, I slam the book closed in frustration while thinking, "I suck!"

It's humiliating to see the greatness in your chosen profession and realize that you climbed as high as you could and still fell short.

I found some of that genius in his book *Big Woods*. "The Bear," a short story, is often cited as his best hunting story, but I had trouble seeing that. In fact, I had to read it half a dozen times over 40 years to find the genius. I think I finally understand what I have been missing, but still, to my mind, his deer-hunting piece "Race at Dawn" is arguably the best hunting short story ever written.

Rather than beat you over the head with his words, Faulkner gently takes you along on an exciting hunting story that digs into the cultural, social and racial issues of the time. He feeds the story as it builds with the fuel of humor, drama and excitement. I feel like I am there near the end, astride Dan along with Mister Ernest and the young boy, bone tired and riding past the spent dogs. I can smell the swamp and feel the raw emotions



Rowan Oak is William Faulkner's home in Oxford, Miss. In a bedroom there is scrawled the author's outline of *A Fable*, a novel that won the Pulitzer Prize.



Faulkner's typewriter sits in his office on a small table his mother gave him. A couple of the writer's guns and a bottle of Hoppe's are displayed in another room.

as they ride up to the buck that Mister Ernest ultimately lets go by dry-firing his unloaded shotgun at him three times. Throughout the story I can feel the love Mister Ernest and the boy have for each other, although social constricts of the time don't allow it to be expressed as it might be today. It's clear though that neither the old man nor the boy would be complete without each other.

"Race at Dawn" is filled with the kind of passages that make you stop, back up and read again. One of my favorites is this one from the boy as they rode off to start the hunt: "When that big old buck got killed today, I knowed that even if he

put it off another ten years, he couldn't 'a' picked a better one."

What hunter has not greeted a day with that same enthusiasm and the feeling that today is the day?

Faulkner aside, we were there mostly to hunt, of course. I had a long string, before COVID shut it down, of visiting Mississippi each year to camp with my friends and hunt deer. I tried to add something more to every trip, both to experience the culture and traditions of Southern hunting and to find a story angle to justify the trip. Each time, though, I planned several days in Tony's tent camp, hunting, eating, sipping

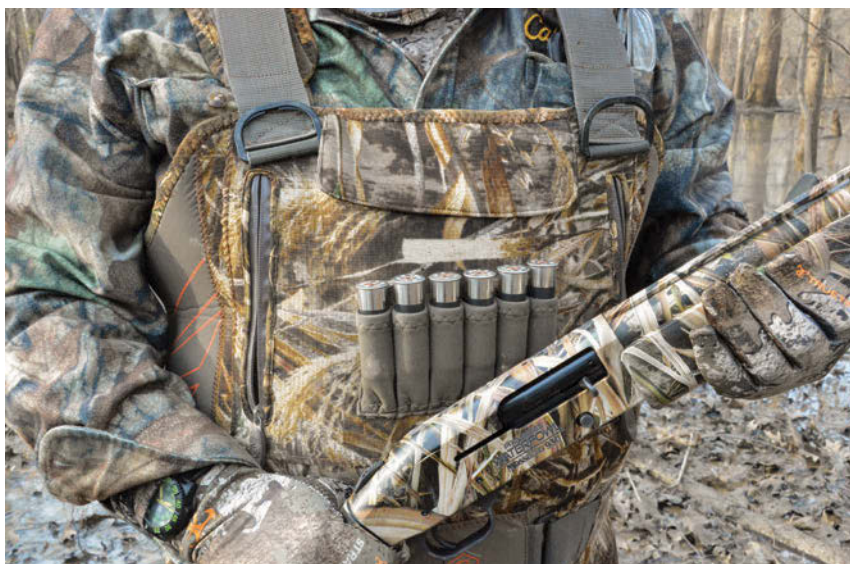
GUNS & AMMO

My rifle was one I built myself on a Remington 700 action. It is chambered for 9.3x62. It is incredibly accurate with most ammo, including the Norma ammo I was using with a 232-grain Oryx bullet. While I missed that buck, the fault was all mine. This gun has accounted for other whitetails and an elk with little drama.

My friend Tony Kinton has a couple of guns in this cartridge, including a left-handed bolt action I built. He has taken Cape buffalo, black bear and whitetails with a 9.3x62. This European cartridge is almost unknown here in the U.S., but hunters looking for a versatile thumper should take a look at the 9.3x62. The more I use mine the better I like it. Ammo is available from Barnes, Hornady, Norma, Nosler and a few others.

My shotgun was a Mossberg 930 Pro-Series Waterfowl covered in Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Blades camo. The shotgun performed flawlessly, despite being partially submerged much of the time while leaning against a tree and fully submerged at least once when I may or may not have fallen (no photos, it didn't happen), not to mention being coated with Delta mud at times (the gun and I). **mossberg.com**

Ammo was Kent Fasteel 2.0 with plated steel pellets. I shot 12-gauge, 1¼-ounce loads of No. 3 shot. This stuff has a muzzle velocity of 1500 fps. It simply turned off all the switches of any well hit duck. **kentcartridge.com/us**



In the flooded timber, the author swung a Mossberg 930 Pro-Series Waterfowl, top. Tony Kinton, above left, and Towsley shot their limit with Kent Fasteel 2.0.

Photos: Author

whisky around the campfire with his, and now my, friends and just living the hunter's life.

I have, like every other old man in history, come to detest some of today's hunting vernacular. The phrase "target buck" just grates on me. Not that we don't have them. Every camp since hunting began has had a legendary buck. I might also point out that it was my generation, the Boomers, who invented trail cameras, so we are not unfamiliar with how this phrase originated. But to reduce a white-tail deer to a "target" just seems somehow unholy.

So when this buck showed up, even though I knew about him and had been in fact hunting for him, I saw a worthy adversary, not a "target."

Deer hunting was tough in Mississippi in 2019. The state had experienced months of floods that held on and even expanded through the spring, summer and into the fall. The deer were forced to seek high ground, often on the levees where they were concentrated into smaller and smaller patches of land. The food ran out and starvation and the coyotes, which were forced on to the same high ground, ravaged the herds. Much of the floodwater had receded by the time I arrived, and the remaining deer had mostly scattered into the ruined landscape.

Tony's property sits on higher ground and had escaped much of the flooding, but the food was picked over and with larger expanses of dry land emerging, the

deer had scattered to take their chances.

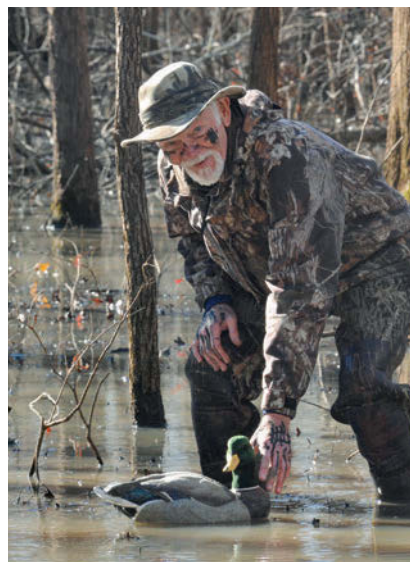
My point is simply that finally finding this buck felt like accomplishing something good. I felt like a hunter, like I had truly earned this deer.

The shot was not easy. I had to stand on an awkwardly tilted treestand and shoot offhand through a lot of brush. It was a long shot under those circumstances, and I felt rushed as he was passing by and would not pause long. I could see a clear path to his shoulder, but somehow I failed to guide the bullet through it. I missed, no doubt hitting a limb, although I could not find the evidence in my later search.

I suppose I could, and later did, treat it like the philosophical approach of Mister Ernest.



On the commissary porch of Dockery Farms blues men refined an American art form. Near here, Robert Johnson supposedly sold his soul to the devil.



PLENTY TO HUNT IN MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi has some great hunting opportunities for a wide range of game including deer, hogs, turkeys and waterfowl as well as a bunch of little critters that scurry and fly. The seasons are long and the bag limits are generous. Best of all, there is lots of public hunting land here. visitmississippi.org

For state hunting license information provided by Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, visit mdwfp.com/license.

For information on the Oxford, Miss., area logon to visitoxford.com or call 662-232-2477.

For info on Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, visit museum.olemiss.edu/rowan-oak or call 662-234-3284.

"Which would you rather have? His bloody head and hide on the kitchen floor yonder and half his meat in a pickup truck on the way to Yoknapatawpha County, or him with his head and hide and meat still together over yonder in that brake, waiting for next November for us to run him again?"

I had not intentionally let this buck go as Mister Ernest had, so that place took a while for me to get to. It was a shot I can and have made many times. But, the odds caught up with me, I must have wobbled just enough before the gun went off to put a branch in the way. I take such events personally and feel them deeply.

So, I pouted and sulked for a day or two as I mentally beat myself inhumanely for my failure. Then I got over it and began to think, as did Mister Ernest, that I will go home, plant my crops and work my fields for the next 351 days to earn the right to come back and hunt him again.

Then COVID-19 struck.

We had moved from Tony's to the Delta halfway through the hunt and hunted ducks in the morning and deer in the afternoon. It was, in most aspects, a perfect blend of Delta hunting. The Delta produces many of the big bucks taken in Mississippi. The fertile ground grows a lot of food and is full of the minerals deer use to grow antlers. Healthy, well-fed bucks can afford to divert the necessary material to growing large antlers. Five years before I took a good buck in the Delta not far from Yazoo City and I was excited to be back on this dark, soggy soil.

The floods, though, had the natural movements of the deer all messed up and a lot of the land was inaccessible. Because somebody had friends in high places, we received an invitation to hunt one afternoon at the Magana Vista club, which is located "inside the levee." This was one of the nicest hunting properties I have seen in the South. The land we hunted was on higher ground and its immense green fields held a lot of deer. There was food, so there were deer. I saw a few good bucks, but the club had a confusing minimum antler requirement requiring a buck to score at least "300" B&C points to be legal to shoot. I am sure that's what I heard, but

perhaps I was confused; my gun writer's hearing doesn't always play nice with a Deep South accent. It didn't matter. The two bucks I saw that might have qualified were too far by twice for me to consider shooting. Still, just seeing all these deer and knowing they would be in the brakes waiting for next year made me happy.

As soon as we came through the camp door that night, my mouth started watering like Pavlov's dog. The only thing better than Conrad Gilmore's gumbo is the aroma as it cooks. As somebody said, "It contains ducks, sausage, shrimp and all sorts." It's hard to deny I am a Yankee, but my palate is Southern. I ate twice my capacity and staggered to my room. We had an early start planned in the morning.

I have been fortunate to travel a lot in my career. Each trip, each hunt, is memorable. But often, what I remember most are the sidebar trips. The extras



The Delta produces many good bucks but 2019 was not kind to deer or hunters. Memories of the author's 2015 Delta buck, left, will have to satisfy him until he can return.

Photos: Author

like a day at Little Bighorn or a visit to an ebony market in Dar es-Salaam or touring Tchaikovsky's house in Russia—they are some of my greatest trophies. We had planned to visit Oxford and Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, the next day. Thanks to Mike Jones, a great friend with Mississippi Tourism, we experienced a private tour of the house and grounds. The most famous part of it all is probably the

bedroom where Faulkner wrote the outline for *A Fable* on the walls. The novel, while not one of his best known, won the Pulitzer Prize.

We toured Oxford, browsed a bookstore and had lunch with two wonderful women from the chamber of commerce. We made a visit to Faulkner's grave where we assisted a student scavenger hunt in verifying the landmark.

We then decided to forgo the evening's hunt and visit some of the other famous Delta landmarks. When Mike pulled into the crossroads of Highway 61 and Highway 49 in Clarksdale, I was disappointed. While it's claimed to be the place where Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil, this busy intersection didn't fit at all with legend. A tourist like me risks death just trying to dance through the nonstop traffic to get to the even more disappointing marker. Mike, a veteran, wisely stayed in the empty, littered parking lot and waited.

From there we drove to Dockery Farms where the blues were born. Well, I suppose the blues were born across the Deep South, but it was Dockery Farms where the music was refined and became the Delta Blues.

It was just getting dark as we arrived at

continued on p. 63 »

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Idaho *Windage*

Some hunts blow you away figuratively while others attempt to do so literally. This hunt for mountain mule deer in Idaho's backcountry did a little bit of both.

By David Herman, Associate Editor

As I stepped off the plane in Missoula and collected my bags, I heaved a heavy sigh of relief. A few tight layovers and flight delays had made it nothing short of a miracle that I arrived at all—much less on time—and I was beyond ecstatic to get moving. Outside in the cool darkness of the Montana night, I met Greg Ray, founder of Outdoor Solutions (outdoorsolutionscorp.com), a long-range shooting school for hunting clientele. We, along with his son Eddie, were about to take a couple rifles on the test of a lifetime, hunting the rugged Idaho backcountry for elusive, world-class mule deer. My rifle of choice was the Springfield Model 2020 Waypoint chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor, which features an adjustable stock and a carbon-sleeved barrel. Shooting less than 1 MOA with the Hornady 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter I'd brought along, I was confident the rifle would prove more than adequate for the task at hand. As our rental car wound southward through the serpentine mountain roads, I couldn't have known that I was only half-right. This hunt would absolutely be a test. But as it turned out, it would test far more than our trusty rifles.

DAY 1

After a little extra shuteye and a late breakfast with our gracious hosts, we mounted an assortment of horses and mules and followed our guides three hours into the very heart of the Idaho backcountry. I sat atop a sturdy, stubborn mount that shared my disused first name (Louis), and did my best not to swoon like a schoolchild over the beauty and expanse of the countryside. With a stern hand and leg, Louis and I eventually gained a rapport as we ambled our way through the burned-out mountain forest. Reaching camp in late afternoon, we picked out cots, rolled out sleeping bags, lit a fire and settled into a warm meal, excited for the days that lay ahead.

DAY 2

This day saw a lot of glassing. We hiked out of camp early by light of the moon, and sat most of the day combing a nearby meadow. We saw quite a few deer, but none of the quality we were after. This was also the only place we ever saw other hunters—two stood about 2,000 yards away, glassing from the top of the meadow downward. Ultimately, this day was little more than a sightseeing trip,

Photo: Tony Bynum



Greg Ray leads his mule out of the trees and into the hillside meadow above camp, a route the party would retrace with considerably more haste five days hence.



and gave us a little taste of the windy conditions to come. Nothing more to report.

DAY 3

It snowed overnight, which I discovered around 1 a.m. as I was forced to make a brief, barefoot foray from my tent. Luckily, it only accumulated a couple inches. Around noon, as we sat by a fire and ate, a fog bank rolled in, and we heard a pack of wolves down the slope from us. Their piercing howls cut the gloom with an eerie resonance. It never cleared enough to see them, but this excitement only added to the entrancing nature of the ghostly scene. This was our first day of real action as we spotted a muley buck, around a 170-class, some 500 yards away across a draw. I set up on him, but the burned trees presented a solid wall, and I could not get a shot before he sauntered away over the ridgeline. Simultaneously disappointed but elated to continue the hunt, we spent the rest of the day glassing before heading for camp.



DAY 4

Our wind shifted, so we tried the other side of the mountain with no success. Greg spotted some elk, but beyond that, we spent most of the day staring down trees, not seeing a single deer until dark. Nonetheless, a good part of the day was spent around a cheery hillside fire, toasting sandwiches in foil (as had become our tradition), so no complaints could be had. What a contrast this would be to day five ...

DAY 5: 0500-1200

The forecast on our guide's Garmin inReach promised this to be the final day of wet and windy weather. Ecstatic at the coming change, we headed out early toward the same hilltop we occupied on day two, over the ridgeline from our camp. As we eased our way to the spot, we saw him: a mature buck, somewhere in the 160s, a mere 75 yards away. Eager for action, I began to set up on the

deer, only to have him bed down behind a log, obscuring all vitals. We hurriedly devised a plan to stalk down and around, using the wind to drop parallel and get a shot. Unfortunately, the buck had bedded well, and the angle of the log and wind meant we couldn't get low enough for a clean shot. We snuck back to our original position, figuring I would set up then take my shot when he stood. Just as we reached our intended position however, the breeze swirled and the buck winded us, sending him bounding away through the dense trees. Exhilarated from the close encounter, we glassed a little more before kindling a lunch fire.

DAY 5: 1200-1730

After a few false alarms on smaller bucks, we struck gold (or more specifically, our eagle-eyed outfitter did) some 2,000 yards away across three small draws. Three bucks, the smallest of which approached 170, stood feeding on

SPRINGFIELD MODEL 2020 WAYPOINT RIFLE

The **Springfield Model 2020 Waypoint** is a backcountry rifle worth its salt. In preparation for this hunt, which promised shots out to 600 yards, I took the rifle to the Peacemaker National Training Center in Glengary, WVa., and dialed it in. At anywhere from 100 to 700 yards, with a Leupold VX-6HD scope on it, the gun rained lead accurately onto any deer-sized target of my choosing. In Idaho, after a slight adjustment for an increase in elevation, the gun's accuracy proved itself again when we checked zero.

My model in 6.5 Creedmoor boasted an adjustable stock that, while it adds a pound, is nice for finding that perfect cheek weld. Its fluted 22-inch barrel was steel, and jacketed in tensioned carbon fiber, meaning the jacket only contacts 5 percent of the steel barrel. The entire assembly free-floats in the carbon-fiber stock, which also sports QD mounts for easy sling attachment, and M-Lok attachment points on the fore-end for a bipod. The proprietary Model 2020 action uses a fluted bolt, a 90-degree bolt handle with removable bolt knob and a Picatinny rail on top for the easy mounting of an optic. A crisp TriggerTech trigger is adjustable from 2.5-5 pounds' pull weight.

While I was unable to let any of my 143-grain Hornady ELD-X bullets fly on this particular trip, I can report the gun hefted, positioned and carried well all across the steep shale cliffsides of northeastern Idaho. My model tipped the scales at a slightly heavy 7 pounds, 8 ounces sans glass, so overall weight was my only worry prior to the trip. But the rifle was barely noticeable slung over my shoulder.

While meticulously shaving ounces may currently be all the rage, the Model 2020 Waypoint proves there's no need to go too light on your mountain rifle of choice, particularly when the rifle in question provides such an excellent balance of comfort, portability and ergonomic shootability. \$2,399; springfield-armory.com

a dense hillside. We hurriedly repacked our gear, donned our packs and beat a forced march across the steep shale hillsides, which jutted like fingers from the main ridgeline, toward our quarry.

Once there, it took quite some time to find the deer again as they were well-disguised, as winter-coated muleys tend to be. Your humble author first spotted a different trio through his Leupold BX-5 Santiam HD 10x42 binocular, and was only pointed to the true threesome with some difficulty. Finally, my crosshairs sat on the mid-sized deer of the bunch (a 170-plus buck), around 550 yards away. As I waited for the largest buck to present Greg with a shot (we were attempting to double, with a report-fire), I heard our guide tell me that whatever I did, "Don't take that shot."

Don't take the shot?! I wondered. What on earth did he mean? This was a 170-class buck! If Greg's deer never allowed a clean angle, was I really to let

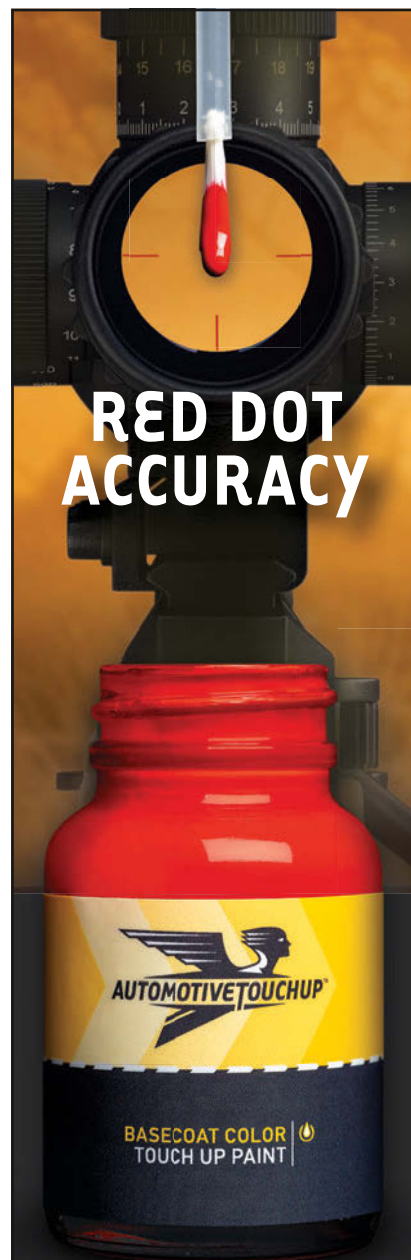
him go? As it turns out, the buck Greg was attempting to down was an atypical monster, and in no way could we risk spooking him from this spot, even if we didn't kill today. The directive may well have saved our lives.

DAY 5: DARKNESS

The big buck never slipped. At one point, Greg had his shoulder in the crosshairs, but waited for one more step to plug the vitals. Alas, the buck doubled back behind his chosen tree, and never yielded another opportunity. Disappointed, but impressed by Greg's steady patience, we snuck back out of the trees amid the fading light unaware things were about to get truly Western.

As we climbed the steep shale, we noticed the wind begin to rise, sleet and ice pouring steadily from the sky. Just the last gasps of the storm blowing out, we thought.

As we made our way onto the barren



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KUIU GEAR

For this hunt I was decked head to ... well, ankle, in Kuiu gear. There's a reason for that. Kuiu has made quite a name for itself over the last several years as a premier purveyor of gear for the discerning backcountry stalker, and we at *American Hunter* wanted to see if it stood up to the hype. I'm here to report it does indeed.

The **PRO LT** series pack system I used to tote my gear into, around and out of the Idaho backcountry was roomy enough for a full complement of cold-weather gear and other essentials thanks to a 4,000-cubic-inch bag. It tips the scales at barely 3.8 pounds thanks to a well-balanced carbon-fiber frame. I credit it with helping me leave the field without a sore back.

Kuiu Guide gloves were warm and waterproof enough to keep my hands comfortable in snow and rain, while the **Kutana** rain gear stopped such elements in their tracks. A **Super Down Pro** parka was ready keep its wearer warm in a blizzard, and packed into its own pocket for a minimalist footprint when not in use. kuiu.com



Photos: Author

ridgeline, however, we began to realize this was no typical storm.

The wind howled with a constant force as we crested the rise. We figured it had to be blowing 50-70 mph. Dead trees, already devoid of their leaves, laid over in its path like slanted black toothpicks. A large stretch of forest still stood between us and camp so we paused and surveyed the scene. In roughly two minutes, more than 30 trees fell, many directly on the path we would have walked. It slowly began to dawn on us just what sort of situation we were in.

With no option but to press on, the bare ridgeline becoming more unlivable by the minute, we worked left, finding the narrowest, most sparse section of trees we could. On a "3 ... 2 ... 1, go!" we ran for it, sprinting for our lives through the tumbling timber. We reached a clearing. The woods still closed for another quarter-mile in front of us, but here we were safe to catch our breath. The day's light now almost fully spent, we collected ourselves, gave another starting shout and ran again into the trees, this section denser and darker than the last.

Following a crude horse trail, we fast-rucked our way over and between already downed trunks. At the halfway point, two of us turned back to check on those a few paces behind. A tree was coming down—as best we could tell in the near darkness, it was right above them. "Run!"

we shouted, and they picked up the pace, the tree crashing barely 10 yards to their rear. At last, we made the meadow above camp. Heaving a collective sigh of relief, we thought we were safe, but our night had only begun.

On a "3 ... 2 ... 1, go!" we ran for it, sprinting for our lives ...

A tree was down already when we entered camp, but it had missed everything but the woodpile. Our guide made his way into the mess to start dinner, and I began to follow, thinking I'd dry my gear in front of the woodstove. As he bent to enter however, the suppressor on his rifle caught the tent, making him pause to remove his pack. This split-second delay caused me to reconsider and instead head for my own tent, where I could remove my dripping-wet boots and start my own fire.

Plopping down on my cot, I peeled off my Lodestars and began to chat with the other hunters. The wind picked up. Suddenly, I saw Eddie lifted up on his cot. Thinking the tent was going skyward, I grabbed the main pole, only to realize

Eddie's cot was the only thing moving. A massive root ball appeared from the earth beneath him, jarring him to the side. The same moment I realized where that tree must have fallen, screams from the mess tent cut the air, and I feared the worst.

Greg and I bolted from our tent, vaulted the freshly fallen tree and rolled under the remaining wall of the mess tent, now pretty well destroyed, a massive fir across it. Our guide lay there, sprawled on his back, but I was thankful my worst fears were not realized. The tree had smashed his pack as he searched inside it for a headlamp. It had knocked him aside and tore muscles in his back but it did not pin him. The woodstove on which I'd intended to warm my hands had taken the full brunt of the tree's weight and lay in pieces, smashed like porcelain upon the ground. The seats, where Greg and Eddie would have already sat had the deer not delayed us, had branches staved through them. Helping the injured party to his feet, we shuttled him outside, as he urged us to all to get to the guide tent—the only one out of the path of any trees.

Issue was, if all the camp tents went down, we would be without any gear to keep warm. With this in mind, Greg and I ran back into our tent to hurriedly pack essentials. Halfway done, our outfitter limped to the door. Impressively self-aware, he informed us quite calmly he was going into shock and needed a



Photos: Author

The outfitter's recently retired hitching posts stand in stark relief to a beautiful sunrise, top, the morning after the storm. Tents and items in them were hammered by falling trees, but the party was thankful that no one was killed.

fire, stat. Greg jumped to help him while Eddie and I continued to pack gear and sleeping bags. More trees went down.

Eddie and I had made several trips to the guide tent and gathered most everything we'd need when I realized I couldn't feel my feet. I had removed my boots to dry before the tree went down, and never put them back on. I quickly shoved my feet in a bag to warm for a few minutes, as temperatures outside had dipped into the teens, before helping collect the last of the gear.

We settled in for a wild night. The storm continually blew the chimney from the stove until we managed to wedge it with a rock. Exhausted, finally I rolled out my bag on the dirt, set an alarm to feed the fire and drifted off to sleep, wind howling to ever more hurricane-like speeds outside.

DAY 6: RESCUE

As the new day dawned, we surveyed the scene. The damage was absolute.

"Woah, that sunrise is beautiful," commented Eddie, always in good spirits. Despite the circumstances, I had to agree. The view encapsulated both the sublime splendor and terrifying power of the natural world, in an odd chiaroscuro of brilliant colors and broken timber.

The horses had survived thanks to the outfitter's practice of leaving them uncorralled. His guiding partner started in from the road with a small coalition of hunters and ranchers around 0700. They would not reach us until around 1400, as they had to cut some 357 downed trees in their path.

As we rode out of the destroyed forest, I was more than a little thankful to draw breath. My thoughts bounced from the beautiful scenery to the injury to the deer in my sights. I knew we all could be thankful not only because we all were capable of surviving outdoors but also because our guide knew what he was doing. Despite his injury, it was his can-do attitude that helped him and the rest of our party even before the worst of the weather set upon us. All of us knew Idaho could have been harder on us. We never got to squeeze a trigger, but none of us could lay blame on anything or anyone for our misfortune. I can't speak for everyone, but I can say I'm not bowed. I'll see you next year, Idaho. **ah**



Sauer 101 Highland XTC

By Ron Spomer, Field Editor



It's not a hunting slogan, but it should be: "In hunting rifles, light makes right." In which case Sauer's new 101 Highland XTC should be one "right" hunting rifle. It weighs just 5.5 pounds.

That's not just light. That's ultralight. Before you discount any 5.5-pound rifle as too insubstantial to be accurate—or bearable to shoot—allow me to put this in perspective. Ultralight rifles and I met in 1988 when I was a 30-something hunter just beginning my adventures in the world's high wilderness. Whitetails, mule deer and elk were under my belt, a pack was on my back, and sheep, goats, ibex, grizzlies, mountain caribou and moose were in my sights.

By then I'd had just enough experience with 8- to 10-pound rifles in steep country to know that I didn't want to be saddled with one. I'd been cutting handles off my backpacking toothbrushes since 1976. Surely I could shave a few ounces from a rifle.

Like most serious riflemen, I'd read that an 8-pound rig was as light as you wanted for ideal, steady, offhand precision. But I wasn't offhand shooting at mountain game. I was taking careful shots, prone over a pack or sitting with fore-end support from a bipod. So

I procured a 5-pound Ultra Light Arms Model 20 in .284 Win. and proceeded to cut a swath.

Bighorns. Dall's. Elk. Mountain goats. Up I went. Down they came. No recoil headaches. No reconstructive shoulder surgery required.

A dozen different ultralight rifles accompanied me afield during the next two decades, each directing bullets where I aimed them, some landing as far as 450 yards out. This success inspired me to try those same ultralight rigs on whitetails, coyotes and more. I was never disappointed. "Light" did, indeed, make my field shooting "right."

With this background I welcomed the chance to review this new Sauer, that company's lightest bolt-action repeater to date. Here's what I've discovered.

With its 20-inch fluted barrel and a Swarovski Z3 3x-9x-36mm scope mounted via Talley One-Piece rings, the S101 weighs 6 pounds, 10 ounces. It is sprightly, well balanced, easy to carry and fast, and the muzzle is threaded for after-market attachments. If you'd handed it to me while I was blindfolded, I'd have hoisted it, shouldered it, swung it and declared it a fine whitetail woods rifle. And shooting it wouldn't have changed my mind. Yes, recoil is fairly sharp, but it does not bring to mind a mule.

Of course, I was not blindfolded when I met the Highland, but my assessment remains the same. This would be a nearly

SAUER 101 HIGHLAND XTC

sauer.de/en

- **Type:** bolt-action centerfire rifle
- **Caliber:** .243 Win., .270 Win., 6.5x55 Swedish, 7x64, .308 Win. (tested), .30-06 Spring., 8mm Mauser, 9.3x62mm, .300 Win. Mag., 7mm Rem. Mag.
- **Barrel:** 20" (tested), 22" (magnum); standard contour; cold-hammer-forged; 1:11" RH twist (.308 Win.); fluted, threaded muzzle, DLS metal treatment
- **Magazine:** detachable polymer box; 5-rnd. capacity (standard), 4-rnd. capacity (magnum)
- **Trigger:** single-stage; 2-lb. pull weight
- **Sights:** none, drilled and tapped for optic bases
- **Safety:** two-position, bolt-shroud mounted slider w/push button
- **Stock:** ultra-lightweight carbon-fiber; 14.25" LOP; straight comb; schnabel fore-end
- **Metal Finish:** matte black
- **Overall Length:** 40" (standard), 42" (magnum)
- **Weight:** 5.5 lbs. (standard), 5.7 lbs. (magnum)
- **MSRP:** \$3,000



ideal bolt-action woods rifle for trackers and still-hunters, but I doubt that's what Sauer designers were aiming at. They were undoubtedly looking up with visions of ibex and sheep dancing in their heads. And the Highland should be ideal there, too.

One can quibble that a cold-hammer-forged 20-inch barrel does not wring the last foot-per-second velocity from even the .308 Winchester for which this sample rifle is chambered. But sacrificing 50 to as many as 150 fps in this age of laser ranging is no big deal. You determine your trajectory curve, measure your range, choose your sub-reticle or dial your turret and drop one spot on.

From a portable Stukey bench, I shot eight different factory loads with bullets from 135 grains to 185 grains. They chronographed from 2765 fps to 2554 fps. I believe a 185-grain .308 bullet at 2554 fps would not bounce off a moose at any reasonable engagement distance. At 400 yards it's still hauling 1,400 ft.-lbs. of energy. (No ibuprofen were needed after the shooting of these groups.)

Three-shot groups measured from .388 inch to 2.8 inches, with most coming in at MOA to 1.4 MOA. I'd call that deadly hunting accuracy in any big-game rifle, particularly an ultralight. And this is a new barrel shooting factory ammo. I've no doubt I could work up some hyper-accurate handloads.

What makes the Highland so light is, of course, its 1-pound, 4-ounce, hand laid carbon-fiber stock, a type becoming increasingly familiar to informed shooters. Carbon layups are part and parcel of high-end cameras and military aircraft, so ought to be more than good enough for a hunting rifle. Straight-line fluting of the bolt body shaves a bit of weight, too, as does the fluting of the barrel. Instead of blued or ceramic-coated steel, Sauer applies what it calls a DLC (Diamond Like Carbon) finish that's 40-times thinner than human hair. It doesn't coat the steel, but impregnates or melds with it



to be virtually a part of it, scratchproof, rustproof, permanent with a noticeably smooth, silky feel without the glare of highly polished, blued barrels.

The Highland's action is the proven, six-lug, push-feed S101 with dual plunger ejectors. The six locking lugs mate into the barrel itself, not the front receiver ring. This barrel extension is heat-fitted to the receiver, cooling to an extremely tight, wiggle-free connection. Bolt lift is a short 60 degrees. The safety switch is on the back of the bolt body (shroud) and silent in operation. It blocks the firing pin and must be pushed forward and up to release, but an integral lock button must be depressed to allow this. It prevents accidental nudging of the safety to the "off" position, but doesn't interfere with an intentional release. The safety locks the bolt, but a button on the

receiver's right side just back of the bolt handle notch unlocks the bolt without unlocking the safety for perfectly safe cycling of a live round from the chamber.

The five-round polymer magazine snaps in and out of a one-piece bottom metal/trigger bow. A deeply recessed release button virtually eliminates chances for an accidental magazine dump. In standard chamberings the polymer, dual stack mag box holds five rounds, accepts them easily and smoothly and feeds with equal efficiency.

Sauer's technique for mating the stock and barreled action involves a small aluminum bedding block epoxied into the stock just forward of the magazine well. It mates precisely to twin posts jutting down from the receiver ring. The front bedding screw draws these parts together for a metal-to-metal fit.

Swivel mounts are flush and push button, but non-rotating, the front one mounted in the schnabel nose facing forward instead of down. This prevents hand/stud and sandbag/stud snagging during recoil.

Stock shape is appropriately sleek and slim with a gently rounded belly, full comb, dual palm swells, and a 14.25-inch length of pull. Trigger pull, advertised as 2 pounds and crisp with no over-travel, was all of that except my pull gauges pegged it at 2.5 pounds.

Among all the ultralight rifles I've had the pleasure of shooting over the past 30 years, this Sauer Highland ranks well toward the top. I would slightly prefer a 22-inch barrel and a chambering of .260 Rem., 7mm-08 Rem. or .284 Win. My only real complaints are two: the stock, like most hollow, synthetic lightweights, is a bit noisy when whacked, and, with no checkering or texture on the grips or fore-end, rather slippery. *ah*



Accuracy Results* **Sauer 101 Highland XTC** .308 Win.

Load	Weight (grs.)	Velocity (fps)	Smallest	Group Size (inches)	
				Average	Largest
Federal Premium Vital-Shok TBT	180	2620	1.00	1.26	1.40
SIG Sauer Elite Hunter Tipped	165	2840	.82	.90	1.15
Winchester Deer Season XP Copper Impact	150	2810	.97	1.16	1.31

* Outdoors | Sandbags | 100 Yards | 3-Shot Group

Photos: Forrest MacCormack



Hornady 6mm ARC

By Jeff Johnston, Field Editor

A few years ago the Department of Defense (DOD) called upon the private sector to develop a caliber somewhere between the .223 Rem. and the .308 Win. that could: 1) fit in an AR-15's small receiver; 2) be effective beyond 1,000 yards from an 18-inch barrel; and 3) allow magazine capacity comparable to the AR-15, yet exhibit significant weight reduction over the .308. The DOD also wanted minimal recoil.

From Hornady's commercial perspective, it felt it could build on its technology from the 6.5 Creedmoor project and piggyback off that round's success to create a ballistically superior cartridge optimized for America's rifle, the AR-15; it would feature long-range capability in terms of energy, accuracy and wind drift; if Hornady was going to invest the money, it also wanted the resulting cartridge to be a capable hunting load for deer-sized game to 500 yards or more—varmints to 1,000-plus. And so the 6mm Advanced Rifle Cartridge (ARC) was created.

It's a short, fat, PPC-looking round that's very deceiving for the power it actually contains. In a nutshell, Hornady took a 6.5 Grendel case, necked it down to .243 (6mm) diameter and moved the 30-degree shoulder back .030 inch so the company's long, ultra-high ballistic coefficient (BC) ELD bullets could be seated as shallow as possible and yet still remain under the AR-15's max overall length of 2.260 inches. Hornady blended powders and experimented with charges and bullet weights until engineers smiled.

HORNADY 6MM ADVANCED RIFLE CARTRIDGE (ARC)

hornady.com

- **Caliber:** 6mm/.244
- **Action Length:** micro (bolt-action)/AR-15
- **Bullet:** 103-gr. ELD-X Precision Hunter; 105-gr. BTHP, 108-gr. ELD Match
- **Ballistic Coefficient:** .512 (ELD-X Precision Hunter); .536 (ELD Match)
- **Muzzle Velocity (adv. fps):** 2800 103-gr., 2750 108-gr.
- **Muzzle Energy (adv ft.-lbs.):** 1,793 103-gr., 1,813 108-gr.
- **Uses:** varmints, deer, hogs
- **MSRP:** \$34.99 per 20-rnd. box

From an 18-inch test barrel, the 6mm ARC launched a 108-grain ELD-X bullet at 2750 fps for 1,880 ft.-lbs. of energy at the muzzle.

But doesn't the 6.5 Grendel, with its heavier bullet but lower velocity, or even the .224 Valkyrie, with its smaller, faster bullet, accomplish the same thing from an AR-15? And what about the venerable .243 Win.? Is Hornady splitting hairs? Is this a marketing ploy?

Well, certainly these cartridges are close, just as so many are nowadays. For the guy shooting 200 to 300 yards, the ARC lends a bigger .244-caliber bullet selection over the Grendel. For the guy shooting beyond 300, there's a distinct advantage in wind deflection. As for the .224 Valkyrie, in some states you can't legally hunt big game with a .22-caliber; 6mm (.244) is the minimum. As for .243 Win., you are not going to hear me

arguing in favor of any Johnny-come-lately over the .243 or 6mm Rem.—except when it comes to performance from a short-barreled AR-15.

All told, the 6mm ARC sends a 108-grain, .536 BC bullet that's still going 1440 fps at 1,000 yards for 500 ft.-lbs. energy with 320 inches of drop and a mere 75 inches of drift in a 10-mph, 90-degree wind. Compare that to a 73-grain ELD bullet from a .556 going 2700 fps resulting in just 157 ft.-lbs. energy at 1,000 yards with 393 inches of drop and 111 inches of drift. As for recoil, the ARC produces 9.9 ft.-lbs. from a 6.8-pound rifle. That's slightly less than a .243 Win.

But this, too, is all on paper. I recently received CMMG's Resolute 200 Mk4 carbine chambered in 6mm ARC for real-world testing, and here's what I found:

Currently a couple dozen companies, including Adams Arms, APF Armory, Barrett, Brownells, Christensen, CMC Triggers, CMMG, GAP, Geissele, Howa, Lantac, Mile High Shooting Accessories, Mossberg, NEMO, Noveske, Odin Works, Proof, Radical Firearms, Ruger, San Tan Tactical, Seekins Precision, Uintah Precision and Wilson Combat chamber rifles in the 6mm ARC, but I chose CMMG's Resolute 200 for its features, accuracy and modest price. But why this particular AR-15 has become my favorite for deer, hog, coyote and prairie dog hunting is because it's chambered in 6mm ARC.

You see, I've plugged passels of pigs with a .223, and I'm ashamed to say I've also wounded more than several with it as well. Fact is, the .223 Rem. is too light and not ideal for big boars (watch

my BullShooters w/Jeff video to see real-world testing); and it stinks for deer much past 100 yards, or anytime shot placement is less than stellar. Same goes for the .300 Blackout. A semi-auto 6.5 Creedmoor is perfect, as are a host of other calibers. The ARC gives me .243-type ballistics from a true AR-15—a gun I can easily suppress, mount a night-vision optic atop and take varmint hunting, yet be adequately powered if a 250-pound pig pokes its snout from the brush at 400 yards. I even let my 8-year-old nephew shoot it, because the AR—with its collapsible stock, suppressor and cool factor—quickly vaulted me to hero status afterward.

One evening as the sun dipped low, I saw a giant boar rooting my pasture, so I slipped to 160 yards and aimed just behind the shoulder. It ran about 70 yards before piling up. An autopsy revealed a complete double-lung pass-through, great performance considering the boar weighed 276 pounds. I later shot the dead boar again with a full-power

.300 Blackout at 100 yards as a test, and it didn't pass through.

At the bench, the 108-grain load averaged 2633 fps from the Resolute's 16-inch, 1:7.5-twist barrel. Accuracy-wise, the CMMG consistently shot sub-inch groups for the first three shots then began stringing them vertically if I really piled on the trigger. Consequently, this suppressed, semi-automatic rifle chambered in 6mm ARC has become my go-to gun for riding around the ranch.

But do I think the 6mm ARC is the end-all caliber? No, because I love to see any and all small arms innovation,

and I'm sure something will follow. (At the time of this writing, Winchester just launched the 6.8 Western, although it is intended for bolt guns.) Would I buy the ARC if I already had a Grendel? Maybe, maybe not, depending whether it becomes popular enough that a decent selection of loads can be readily found. I do, however, think it's the best all-around cartridge for the AR-15 to date; better than the .223, Grendel, 6.8 SPC and .300 Blackout. But even if it doesn't catch on, I commend Hornady for rising to the challenge. Options are a good thing, and so is American innovation. *ah*



Accuracy Results* **Hornady 6mm ARC**

Load	Weight (grs.)	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)		
			Smallest	Average	Largest
Hornady ELD Match	108	2633	.90	.99	1.12
Hornady ELD-X Precision Hunter	103	2671	1.00	1.15	1.25

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Photo: Forrest MacCormack



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[1] Recognizing that one size hasn't always fit all, Avian-X designed the HDR Strutter with customizable features that allow you to utilize a single decoy for any situation. Shipped with two interchangeable heads (one red and one white), removable strutting wings and a synthetic tail fan, you can choose the level of aggression your decoy displays. By adjusting the length of the outside fan feathers, you can also set the HDR Strutter to mimic both a dominant tom or a young jake. Decoy is fully flocked and sports incredibly realistic detail down to the beard and spurs. If you're looking to take the realism even further, swap out the included tail fan and wings for the real thing! \$249.99; avian-x.com



Franchi Affinity 3 Elite Turkey

[2] This inertia-operated semi-auto has been upgraded to "Elite" status with extras that turn this workhorse into a dedicated turkey gun. In addition to a 24-inch barrel and pistol grip, the Affinity 3 Elite Turkey features an expanded loading port, a large bolt release, oversized bolt handle, bright fiber-optic sights, Optifade Subalpine camo on the synthetic stock, a protective Midnight Bronze Cerakote finish on the barrel and receiver, two extended turkey chokes, a lengthened forcing cone for better patterns, a TSA recoil pad and a short Picatinny rail for the mounting of a red-dot optic. It's also adjustable for drop and cast. Available in 12- and 20-gauge with a 3-inch chamber. \$1,249; franchiusa.com



TrueTimber AirPack 90 Ground Blind

[3] By relying on inflatable beams for structure, the innovative TrueTimber AirPack 90 is lighter and more compact than comparably sized blinds. The blind's durable outer shell in TrueTimber's Strata camo pattern encloses a roomy 75x75-inch interior footprint that reaches over 7½ feet tall, yet stuffs neatly in its backpack with a total carry weight of 20 pounds. Using the supplied pump, the blind sets up in minutes and is strong enough to withstand snow and wind that would wreck models built on thin rods or poles. Large, zippered windows provide rifle hunters surround shooting, while a vertical door-slot caters to bowhunters, and both come with removable, shoot-through mesh curtains. This blind is as capable and comfortable as they come, yet portable enough to go anywhere. \$259.99; truetimber.com



Dryshod ViperStop Snake Hunting Boot

[4] Built specifically for the spring woods, the ViperStop snake boots from Dryshod house a breathable, moisture-wicking air-mesh lining to keep your feet cool inside of an extra-tall, hand-laid, waterproof and puncture-resistant rubber shell to keep you safe from the season's fanged dangers. Adjustable gussets provide the perfect fit for all-day comfort. These boots also sport a removable sock liner, a nylon shank, instep reinforcement and a durable outsole with lugs to handle any terrain. Available in Veil camo. \$189.95; dryshodusa.com



Nomad Killin' Time Turkey Vest

[5] Complete with specialized pockets for box calls, mouth calls, pot calls, water bottles, decoys, stakes and more—28 different pockets in total—the Killin' Time Turkey Vest from Nomad has the room to carry what you need for an all-day grudge match. Adjustable at 14 points for a customized fit, this vest comes clad in Mossy Oak Bottomland camo, or, exclusive to Nomad, Mossy Oak Shadow Leaf camo. A built-in seat folds out of the way when not in use, and an additional high-density foam seat cushion with magnetic attachment can be deployed quickly for added comfort, or removed altogether. For those of us keeping our eyes open for another bounty in the spring woods, Nomad built in a mesh stow sack for the collection of morel mushrooms. \$180; nomadoutdoor.com



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le.nra.org

Public and private officers interested in becoming law enforcement firearm instructors should attend one of NRA's Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor Development Schools. NRA Police Pistol Combat competition is intended to be used as an extension of an officer's training.



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gunshows.nra.org

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2020 NRA Youth Wildlife Art Contest



By Joseph P. DeBergalis, Jr.
Executive Director,
General Operations



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stateassociations.nra.org

As we continue to celebrate the 150th year of your National Rifle Association, I want to highlight the annual NRA Youth Wildlife Art Contest. This contest encourages young people to nurture their interest for the visual arts, hunting and wildlife conservation. The 2020 winners were selected last fall, and for the first time, submissions were sent in electronically. Every year, I look forward to seeing the incredible entries submitted from all over the United States.

Since its inception in 1987, the NRA Youth Wildlife Art Contest has challenged young artists to create exceptional works of art depicting North American wildlife. Entries must portray any North American game bird or animal that may be legally hunted or trapped. Open to any student in grades 1 through 12, including home-schooled children, the contest does not require NRA membership to participate.

For students who are interested in hunting and wildlife, this contest is an outlet for creative talent, practicing artistic techniques and refining wildlife identification skills through the creation of original works. The goal has always been to foster young artists' enthusiasm for the outdoors by honing animal identification skills, along with expanding their knowledge regarding the continent's indigenous wildlife. Over the years, it has resonated with young artists, who must carefully study an animal and hone their techniques to not only accurately depict a species, but also to give their entry life. The contest also reinforces the positive effects of hunting and wildlife conservation with the public at large.



Cat. IV 1st place:
Ashley Zhang,
Coppell, Texas.

During the 2020 contest, a total of \$7,000 in cash prizes were distributed. Entries are divided into four categories based on grade level: Category I (1st – 3rd), Category II (4th – 6th), Category III (7th – 9th) and Category IV (10th – 12th). Judges select first-, second- and third-place entries from each category to receive prizes of \$750, \$500 and \$250, respectively. Additionally, the Best in Show recipient, selected from the entries across all four categories, receives a \$1,000 grand prize.

Ten-year-old FayFay He of Chandler, Ariz., is the 2020 NRA Youth Wildlife Art Contest Best in Show winner. He submitted a scene of an elk herd crossing a river that really wowed our judges. Congratulations to He, along with all the other award winners!

You can see all of the 2020 winners, as well as details on how to enter the 2021 contest, at **artcontest.nra.org**.



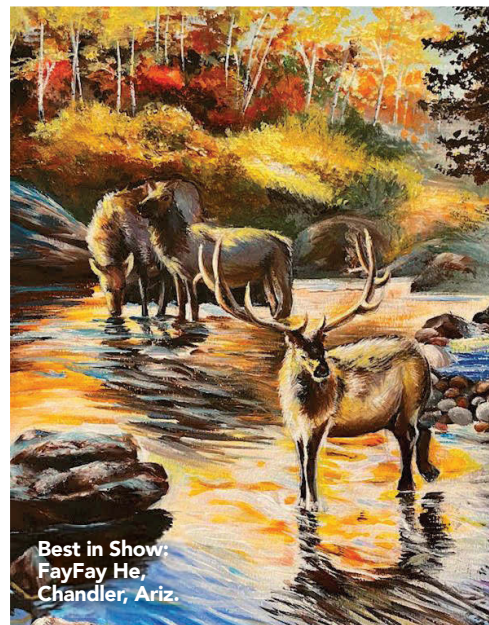
Cat. III 1st place:
Andrew Han,
Chino Hills, Calif.



Cat. II 1st place:
Jiada Rivera,
Chandler, Ariz.



Cat. I 1st place:
Olivia Li,
Chandler, Ariz.



Best in Show:
FayFay He,
Chandler, Ariz.

Potterfields Donate Bespoke Shotguns To Raise Funds For NRA

A special auction later this month to benefit NRA and the NRA Whittington Center comes as welcome news for all members and everyone who values American freedoms, and this fundraiser will especially interest fans and collectors of finely crafted firearms. Going on the block on April 27 at Morphy's Auctions will be 10 bespoke Westley Richards shotguns, all of them 20- and 28-gauge side-by-sides that were custom-built by the historic British maker for an American collector between 1985 and 1999.

Especially noteworthy is that these valuable guns are a gift from MidwayUSA founders Larry and Brenda Potterfield, whose generosity to the NRA and the Whittington Center, and whose philanthropy to the shooting sports is unprecedented. The Potterfields were instrumental in starting the Friends of NRA program, hosting the first event in their hometown of Columbia, Mo., and the popular events have since generated an amazing \$800 million for The NRA Foundation. While the family's continuing support for numerous NRA causes is legendary, this one is uniquely fitting because of Larry's well-known love for firearms of all kinds and especially for fine smoothbores.



Photo courtesy Morphy Auctions

A collection of engraved, best-quality Westley Richards shotguns—including a pair of 28-ga. sidelocks—donated by Larry and Brenda Potterfield, will be auctioned April 27 by Morphy Auctions to benefit NRA.

According to Dave Kelner, NRA Whittington Center director, this marks the second consecutive year the Potterfields have come through with "challenge grants" that in turn motivate other donors. "Last year Mr. and Mrs. Potterfield put up a very significant bequest on the basis that we would need to match it—and I'm happy to report we achieved that goal. This year's auction proceeds also come with the stipulation that we match that amount—and we expect that to be a big number, too. So we'll have some work to do, but rest assured, we'll get there."

Larry Potterfield said that his purpose for acquiring the guns was to support NRA. "We wouldn't be in business if not for the NRA. I want my grandkids to have the same right to keep and bear arms that I have, and NRA is the foremost guardian of those rights. The NRA Whittington Center is the mecca of the shooting sports, and it is our intention to ensure it remains that way."

The entire Westley Richards set sports deluxe wood and is fully

engraved. Many of the hand-finished guns come with two barrel sets and accessories, and most appear to have been proof-fired only. Genuine works of art, the shotguns bear unique sequential serial numbers. To provide NRA the greatest return possible, there will be no seller's premium. For further details on this landmark donation of prized firearms, as well as directions on how to register for the bidding, contact Morphy Auctions at 877-968-8880 or go to morphyauctions.com.

"The NRA is profoundly grateful for the donation of these magnificent firearms," said NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre. "There's no way to overstate the critical role Larry and Brenda Potterfield play in helping the NRA safeguard freedom and liberty and in assuring America has a magnificent range complex like the NRA Whittington Center. They are American patriots, true friends to all gun owners, and are among the most generous benefactors in the 150-year history of our Association." **dh**



Photo courtesy MidwayUSA

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**LATEST
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NRA Applauds Attorneys General Amicus Brief In New York Carry Case

In December, The National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA) partnered with the New York State Rifle and Pistol Association and asked the Supreme Court to hear a challenge to New York's restrictive process for issuing concealed-carry licenses.

In February, 23 attorneys general filed an amicus brief in support of that petition. That effort was led by Attorneys General Eric S. Schmitt of Missouri and Mark Brnovich of Arizona. Also signing on to the brief were Attorneys General Steve Marshall of Alabama, Ed Sniffen of Alaska, Leslie Rutledge of Arkansas, Ashley Moody of Florida, Christopher M. Carr of Georgia, Lawrence G. Wasden of Idaho, Theodore E. Rokita of Indiana, Derek Schmidt of Kansas, Daniel Cameron of Kentucky, Jeff Landry of Louisiana, Lynn Fitch of Mississippi, Austin Knudsen of Montana,

Douglas J. Peterson of Nebraska, Wayne Stenehjem of North Dakota, Dave Yost of Ohio, Mike Hunter of Oklahoma, Alan Wilson of South Carolina, Jason R. Ravensborg of South Dakota, Ken Paxton of Texas, Sean D. Reyes of Utah and Patrick Morrisey of West Virginia.

Attorneys general have a "special responsibility to safeguard their citizens' fundamental rights, including their right to bear arms in self-defense outside the home," the brief argues. It also argues that "liberty ensures security. The Founding generation knew this all too well, and they enshrined the right to bear arms in their constitutions to keep it safe, not just from kings, but from legislatures as well."

The NRA-ILA greatly appreciates the efforts that these attorneys general put into this brief and their support for the right to keep and bear arms.

istock photo by powerofforever

NRA-Backed Lawsuit Challenges Maryland Handgun Qualification License

In January, the plaintiffs in an NRA-backed lawsuit challenging Maryland's Handgun Qualification License law asked the court to rule that the law violates the Second Amendment. The Handgun Qualification Law requires all law-abiding Maryland residents who wish to purchase a handgun to first fill out an application, obtain a copy of their fingerprints from a third party, attend a lengthy classroom instruction, pass a live-fire exercise, pay a \$50 application fee and wait up to 30 days for the state police to process the information.

According to Maryland's own expert witness, the Handgun Qualification Law was

created to "intimidate" law-abiding citizens from exercising their Second Amendment right to buy a handgun. That is because, in addition to the Handgun Qualification Law, Maryland law already requires handgun purchasers to undergo a separate background check, pay a registration fee and wait seven business days before they can take possession of the gun. These laws force law-abiding citizens who wish to purchase a handgun to wait at least 39 days to obtain this legal item.

The case is called *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc., v. Hogan*. It was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Maryland.

NRA-ILA

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State Right-To-Carry Recognition Laws Bolster National Movement

A top priority for gun-rights supporters at the federal level is national Right-to-Carry reciprocity legislation. On Jan. 4, Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.) introduced H.R. 38, or the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act. The legislation would ensure that Right-to-Carry permit holders could carry throughout the country, and that their permits would be recognized by every state.

Important federal legislation like H.R. 38 often has a political tipping point, where such legislation is enacted once the change it would bring about is already the status quo in enough states. At present, 20 states grant outright recognition to Right-to-Carry permits from all other states. Moreover, three additional states allow law-abiding nonresidents to carry regardless of whether they have a Right-to-Carry permit.

The more states that enact outright-recognition legislation, the more outright recognition becomes the national standard for the Right to Carry. This, in turn, will help to move the ball forward on federal national Right-to-Carry legislation that will ensure law-abiding citizens from across the country are able to carry for self-defense in the remaining intransigent jurisdictions such as New York and California.

Outright-recognition legislation can have even broader implications for the fight to protect the Second Amendment, as it further acculturates society to lawful individuals carrying a firearm for self-defense. Consider how attitudes around handguns have changed since the Right-to-Carry movement began in Florida in 1987. That year, a Gallup poll asked survey takers "Do you think there should or should not be a law that would ban the possession of handguns, except by the police and other authorized persons?" Forty-two percent of respondents answered in the affirmative and only 50 percent outright opposed such a measure. In October 2020, Gallup asked the same question. A mere 25 percent of 2020 respondents favored a handgun ban, while a whopping 74 percent opposed a prohibition.

As Americans become more accustomed to carrying a firearm for self-defense, become aware of a friend or family member that does so or notice that an increase in the exercise of the Right to Carry does not increase violent crime, their broad attitudes on gun control shift. Outright-recognition legislation helps to continue this process by further protecting and encouraging the exercise of the Right to Carry.

It is essential that all gun owners work together to enact pro-gun measures like outright-recognition legislation. While the immediate benefits of a given policy might not accrue to every individual gun owner, gun-rights supporters should know that their hard work will always pay intangible and practical dividends down the road. **ah**

standing guard *continued from p. 12*

Don't go on TV lamenting another tragic, violent crime—unless you do your damn jobs, enforce the laws on the books and take the criminals off the streets.

Don't give us your hollow, empty rhetoric and sound bites—because we're on to you. We don't believe you. You're not honest. Because you would deny us our most basic, fundamental right to stay alive.

As NRA members, we are all still united by a single promise. It's a promise we first made when we were kids: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Don't let the chaos of current events tarnish the majesty of its meaning.

We don't promise to try when it's convenient, we pledge our allegiance. Not to who's powerful or popular, but to the flag of the United States of America. And not just to its stars and stripes, but to the republic for which it stands. Which isn't one faction, but one nation. Not under tyranny, but under God. Not divided, but indivisible. With liberty and with justice, not for a few, but for all!

You and I have now come to a point in time when the full weight of that promise rests squarely on our shoulders. Joe Biden, Kamala Harris and their allies in Congress are publicly vowing to flat-out decimate the Second Amendment and destroy the promise of liberty and freedom that is America. They don't want to simply regulate your gun rights, or chip away at your freedom around the edges. They want to register, ban and confiscate your firearms.

At the same time, they're making it easier for violent criminals to run wild and have their way with innocent, law-abiding citizens. These are the stakes, and they couldn't be higher.

I know many of you are beaten down by the seemingly endless stream of struggles the past many months have presented. And I know the vultures in the media are working overtime to convince Americans the Second Amendment's days are numbered—that our children and grandchildren will never know the freedom and opportunity that you and I enjoy today.

But I say they're wrong. And I say that with full confidence because of NRA members like you.

Never forget that the power of your voice resonates far and wide, carrying the weight of millions of NRA members and tens of millions more Americans who support our cause and look to us for leadership. There is no more unstoppable force in the history of American politics than NRA members.

I know that because I've lived it—up close and personal—over the past 40 years. And I can tell you, beyond the shadow of a doubt, our freedom-hating enemies know it too. When we Stand and Fight, freedom flat-out wins.

So from where you sit right now, I'm asking you to fight. Fight by recruiting your fellow freedom-loving patriots across this nation to join the National Rifle Association of America. Fight like your very right to survival is on the line. Fight with the same patriotic spirit our Founders fought with when they established the greatest nation on earth.

Let history remember that when Joe Biden, Charles Schumer, Nancy Pelosi and their billionaire backers tried to destroy our freedom—you were there and you fought back. You stood in the breach. You defended America and our Constitution.

And you were the reason our Second Amendment rights, our American values and our freedom not only survived, but thrived, for decades to come!



IN MEMORY NRA-ILA CONTRIBUTIONS

January 1 - 31, 2021

Less Osborne, Walnut Creek, CA (from: Gene Osborne); **John Albritton** (from: Anonymous Donor); **Max John Kilgore**, Wolf Lake, IN (from: Colette Kilgore); **Robert Hoyt Johnson**, Battle Creek, MI (from: Gary & Lynn Davenport); **Captain James C. Rogers** (from: Elizabeth Ratledge); **Max E. Clements**, Wesley Chapel, FL (from: Lynn Clements); **Blair Mathews**, Coldwater, MI (from: Yearling Well Drilling); **Daniel Lendvay**, High Falls, NY (from: Wawarsing Rod and Gun Club); **John A. Del Savio**, Saratoga Springs, NY (from: Monday Shooting Shack Club); **Michael Berta**, Modesto, CA (from: Modesto Rifle Club); **Ron Kendall**, Modesto, CA (from: Modesto Rifle Club); **John Horton**, Modesto, CA (from: Modesto Rifle Club); **Jim Laird**, Modesto, CA (from: Modesto Rifle Club); **Jerome Willis**, Modesto, CA (from: Modesto Rifle Club).



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NRA Wine Club

Dockery, and I swear I could hear haunting guitar notes calling folks to the commissary porch; workers gathered there at the end of the day and the blues men would play awhile. Soon, the scene moved to another building on higher ground where a well-lighted window stood as a beacon in the dark. The window was a signal for anybody who was tired of work to follow. Fans could pay a quarter door charge in exchange for a night of dancing to musicians they had no idea would become legends.

I could feel the presence of Charley Patton, the father of Delta Blues.

We stood on the foundation of that porch and I could feel the presence of Charley Patton, the father of Delta Blues, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf and so many more founding fathers of this American art form.

These places hold memories, but unlike those of the music at Dockery, sometimes the memories aren't pleasant. During a hunt in Germany I visited Nuremberg, and I remember standing on Hitler's reviewing platform there and saying I could still feel the evil. A rather uninspired member of our group replied, "Nah, it's just bricks and stones," but he was wrong.

Mike drove a mile to a remote intersection of two dirt roads. "This is where I think the real crossroads are," he said. This made more sense. It fits; it's easy walking distance from Dockery Farms. It's dark, remote and the kind of place where such bargains are struck.

I thought I had one more day to hunt deer, but an impending storm convinced me to change my plans and leave a day early. I was re-routed to Newark, where I was stranded for hours. That is where I believe I first encountered COVID-19 and all that it inspired. I didn't know then that I was traveling home from my last hunting trip for a while.

Even if somehow it turns out to be my last ever, "I knowed that even if I put it off another ten years, I couldn't 'a' picked a better one." **dh**

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Introducing the Sons-in-Law To Hunting Turkey in Kansas

By Douglas E. Lierle, Lone Tree, Colo.

I introduced my two sons-in-law to the great sport of hunting in 2019, when I took both of them on their first-ever hunt during the opening week of spring turkey season on a river-bottom farm in my native Kansas. These young men, in their mid- and late-30s, joined the NRA at my encouragement and both have obtained their concealed-carry permits (also at my urging). They have since armed themselves with fine shotguns, rifles and handguns.

Matt Kroupa, my oldest son-in-law, and Brant Gilbert, my younger, enjoyed an experience that created outdoorsmen for life. On opening day, we were buddy hunting in our blinds, Matt with me and Brant with my brother-in-law Dan. The gobblers were hot and were answering my calls before first light. We had a few decoys placed along the edge of the winter wheat and milo stubble.

About midmorning, Matt and I heard shots from Brant's blind. A few minutes later, we looked towards their blind about 400 yards away and there was Brant, facing me and Matt and proudly holding two big toms and smiling like a Cheshire cat. Dan also bagged his two toms on this trip, but Matt and I got skunked. Still, it was among the most memorable hunts of my life with these two young men. To quote Matt, "This was an amazing adventure."

One very unusual thing about this hunt is that during my entire career of hunting and fishing, my friends and relatives have never taken a good trophy photo. Either the hunter's head is cut off or most of the animal is not visible. Brant's quality photo (included here) was a minor miracle.

Brant and Matt are still learning how to call in gobblers during the spring season, but they are quick studies and are practicing with diaphragm calls. I personally prefer my box calls, and on this hunt Dan and I did all the calling. My sons-in-law had never heard a tom gobble before in the wild, and as you likely know, turkey hunting during the mating season is a rush. It is my favorite hunt of all.

Matt and Brant will join me this April for spring turkey in north-central Kansas, and they will join me this December for their inaugural big-game hunt when we go whitetail hunting on the same farm. This part of Kansas is characterized by river-bottom farms with lots of cover, plenty of food, huge roost trees of every kind imaginable and turkeys galore. There



are rivers and creeks everywhere, and the creek running through our farm can actually be navigated in a rowboat or canoe, despite the occasional sandbar.

My wife and I are blessed with a large extended family, and the majority of them are in Colorado. Most are devout supporters of the NRA, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. While my oldest daughter, Beth, is married to Matt, and my middle daughter, Amy, is married to Brant, it remains to be seen if Briana's (my now-engaged youngest daughter) fiancé, will join us on future hunts. We can remain hopeful!

I encourage all freedom-loving Americans to support the NRA. According to a recent column in *American Hunter* magazine, there were more than 7.5 million new gun owners in 2020 alone, but less than 10 percent belong to the NRA. Sign up your friends and relatives so we have a "Freedom Fund" to help fight those who would take our freedom away from us. **dh**

Do you have an exciting, unusual or humorous hunting experience to share?

Send your story (800 words or less) to **americanhunter@nrahq.org** or to *American Hunter*, Dept. MH, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400. Include your NRA ID. Send digital images in their original size to prevent email from resizing them. Be sure of permission to use content.

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